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THE  
FOUNDATIONS OF MORALITY

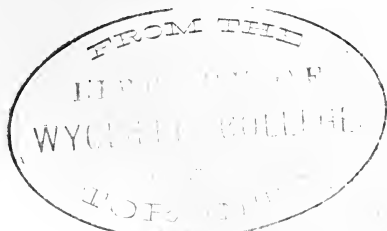
BEING

*DISCOURSES ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THEIR  
ORIGIN AND AUTHORITY.*

BY THE REV.

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## P R E F A C E.

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I HAVE tried in these discourses to estimate the kind of natural and inherent testimony that is borne by the Mosaic Decalogue to its own authority and origin. We find the Ten Commandments accepted as the basis of moral and social life, in the most civilised nations of the world. Why is this? Why do their enactments and prohibitions receive the common consent and acquiescence of mankind? Is there any reason why they should continue to do so? Is there any reason why they should not be repealed? Can we be sure that this common consent and acquiescence will not be withheld from them after a time? And if it will not, why will it not?

Now, the answer to these questions will

either be, Because there is so much in the Ten Commandments that is in accordance with the obvious constitution and requirements of society, that the attempt to reject them will be fatal to society itself; or else, Because these Ten Commandments have a Divine sanction and authority which raises them entirely above the apprehension of any such rejection. And the first answer will, in point of fact, be very nearly equivalent to the second. Because if it can be shown that the actual constitution of society is arranged on anything like the moral basis of the Decalogue, that will be a very significant indication that its moral precepts have the binding force which they could not have if they did not proceed from the same origin as society itself.

For instance, it is impossible to suppose that the seventh commandment, if it can be shown to be in accordance with the greatest welfare and perfection of society, can have no more than the kind of casual significance derived



from accidental correspondence. If society is constituted to move in accordance with the requirements of the seventh commandment, it is too much to suppose that such constitution is accidental on the one hand, or that the expression of the seventh commandment is merely the self-originated utterance of society in contemplation of its own requirements on the other. In fact, even if we could imagine such an origin as this for the seventh commandment, it would indeed show, not that that precept was Divine, but that the will revealed was the will not of society itself, but of some One who was responsible for the constitution of society, and consequently that the seventh commandment was the accurate reflection of His will. To suppose that the real constitution of society is moral in its basis and yet does not point to a moral will and Governor is absurd. Hence the enunciation of the moral law is itself a witness to a mind and will enunciating it, and also a rigid and emphatic protest against the idea that the

constitution of society is an accidental thing having no significance or authority.

If, however, the enunciation of the moral law, when rightly understood, is a witness to the authority and the will of One in whose name it is enunciated, so that the law which forbids certain acts cannot be severed from the utterance of a Person who has a right to say *Thou shall not*, it is likewise a witness to something more. Because, as a matter of fact, the oldest and most authoritative expression of the moral law is based upon the self-revelation of a Person who claims to be responsible for this law. And, indeed, it is not conceivable that there should be any personal utterance of the moral law without, at all events, sufficient self-revelation to command our allegiance. We must know something of the Person whose will we are to obey in proportion to the willingness and zeal with which we are to obey it. Thus the moral law is not only based upon self-revelation,

but also preceded with the enunciation of precepts which have exclusive reference to Him. It is indeed this self-revelation and these precepts which form the necessary basis and foundation of the moral precepts, and not the moral precepts upon which the others rest. We cannot separate the one from the other for we cannot separate the moral law from a certain degree of self-revelation ; and the self-revelation which says "I am the LORD" says also "Thou shalt have none other gods but me."

But herein is involved the essential principle of Religion, that is, the manifestation of the object of worship to the heart of the worshipper ; and thus we begin to see the common origin of Morality and Religion. The moral law, if a reality, involves so much self-revelation as is contained in "I am the LORD." As a matter of fact, our knowledge of the moral law runs up into this formula of self-revelation, and can by no means be severed from it. He

who makes known the law as His law makes known Himself. He does not make known the law except in making known Himself. Take away the personal authority of the law, and you take away the law itself; for it becomes no longer a law, but at the most an induction, a creation of the mind and subject to the mind creating it. Thus morality and religion are seen to be coördinate, and religion is not dependent upon morality but morality upon religion. Destroy the foundations of morality, and you do indeed destroy religion, for there can be no true religion without morality; but destroy the foundations of religion, and you have destroyed that which is the basis also of morality, and it will be impossible for morality to last, as it will be for a tree to live of which the tap-root has been cut. The practical testing of these principles is virtually the problem of the day, which will have to be practically worked out; but we have no hesitation as to the principles themselves, and are perfectly clear as to their

soundness. Whether or not our statement of them is logically accurate, the reader must decide, but we have tried to make it so and must abide the decision.

If the Law can be shown to be lacking in authority in proportion as it is cut off from the self-revelation of a Person, then is the just enforcement of the claims of the moral law identical with and dependent upon the enforcement of the reality of this self-revelation; and thus not only is morality shown to be dependent upon the reality of a revelation, but we discover in the true realisation of the claims of morality a valid basis for the ultimate foundation of the evidences of religion. Unquestionably the phenomena which attended the delivery, the preservation and the subsequent history of the moral law are such as cannot fairly be dealt with without shutting us up to the acknowledgment of the presence and the operation of the supernatural; and this is what the Evidences of

Revelation must mean—namely, that a certain definite religion has traces of Divine authority and sanction which distinguish it sufficiently from all other religions, and are in themselves satisfactory because bearing traces of supernatural action which, if genuine, can have no other object than this authentication and proof.

I am well aware that in the present day the word supernatural has a very ominous sound; but for all that I am convinced that if we have no supernatural religion we have no religion worthy of the name, and if our religion has no evidence of being rooted in and derived from a supernatural revelation, so neither can we have any permanent basis for morality.

The question Why is right right? is one which points us to the very foundation of morals. If there is a God, and if God has not left Himself without witness, then the answer to this question will be, Because it is

declared to us as that which is in accordance with His will, and that which is in accordance with His will must be right. Right is right because it is in accordance with the standard of right, and what God has declared as His will must be the standard of right. It is not right because He has arbitrarily declared it, but He has declared and revealed it as His will because it is right; and right is that which corresponds with His nature. If we have no means of ascertaining what His nature is, we have no means of ascertaining what is right, but as far as He has revealed His nature and His will to us, that which is in accordance therewith must be right. The revelation of the one is the revelation of the other: but take away the being of God and the revelation of God, and there is and can be no other standard of right than that which for the moment, and under all the circumstances, happens to be the most useful, the most advantageous, and the most expedient, and this of necessity must vary as

the occasion varies. Thus destroy the reality of Revelation, and you sap the foundations of Morality,—but reveal the foundations of Morality as permanent and unalterable, and they are seen to be identical with those of Revelation itself.

STANLEY LEATHES.



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## I.

“I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”—  
EXODUS xx. 2.

“**I** HAVE many times assayed,” said Luther, “thoroughly to investigate the Ten Commandments, but at the very outset, ‘I am the Lord thy God,’ I stuck fast ; that very one word, I, put me to a *nonplus*. He that has but one word of God before him, and out of that word cannot make a sermon, can never be a preacher.” It may seem a rash and even an audacious thing to attempt to do that which the great reformer declared had oftentimes baffled him ; but the statement he makes in the same breath, that one word of God is enough for any preacher, encourages me to make the attempt, inasmuch as even when my words fail, I shall know that they are God’s words which I endeavour to unfold, and that they will survive my failure. At the present day, moreover, it is of special importance to uphold and enforce morality, to understand what we mean by morality, to understand why it is that morality has any

claim upon us, if we acknowledge such a claim, and what is the foundation upon which morality rests, and which is so essential, that, if it is destroyed, morality is destroyed too. There are possibly those to whom morality has somewhat of an ominous and fatal sound. It reminds them of the deep sleep that had fallen on the Church in this land some eighty or a hundred years ago, from which it was aroused by the trumpet tones of men who came from God, and told their fellow-men that morality without religion was nothing worth, and, so saying, told them truly. But times are greatly changed now, and the whole aspect of thought is altered. It is not, God forbid, as a substitute for religion that we uphold the claims of morality : far from it. On the contrary, we want to inquire what morality itself is, and whether there is not something else beneath it which virtually implies all that religion affirms, and whether it is not itself dependent for its very existence upon that which religion affirms.

But more than this, in the present day it is too often morality in which many are fain to take refuge from the breaking up of the foundations of faith on every side, and the loosening of their hold upon religion. They reason thus : "Amid the prevailing strife of tongues, it is

impossible for us, as simple laymen, to come to any satisfactory decision as to the respective merits of this and that belief, but meanwhile we must do something, and must have something to guide us in what we do: we must have something to live by; and if we cannot resolve ourselves as to the particular phase of our religion, we can at least lead moral lives, and we know that we are right and must be right in doing so; then this we will do: we will be just, and act justly; we will be honest and upright, diligent, truthful, and pure; and all the rest we will leave alone; we will not be bothered by it, but will let it go." A very wise and excellent conclusion, and one, thank God, vastly to be preferred before that conclusion which in other times men too readily adopted, of making their uncertainty about religion an excuse for the immorality of their lives. But it will be my endeavour to show that if the one course was to be condemned, the other likewise is to be deplored, and for the selfsame reasons that we do condemn the one. I shall endeavour therefore to discover why it is right to be moral, and whether, if we have any ground to be sure of this, we have not sufficient and equal cause to go still further, and not to rest satisfied with morality as morality, but to embrace the essential truths and principles of

religion also. It is a high and important theme, and with all sincerity and earnestness do I invoke, at the outset, the assistance and the illumination of that gracious Spirit who it was promised should guide us into all the truth.

At the very commencement, then, it is to be noted that the words before us are declared to be the very words of God: "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God," and so forth. We all know where this was—namely, at the giving of the Law from Sinai.

I. But the question is, and we must ask it, whether the words were spoken at all, or, if spoken, were spoken by God, and how it is that we know or have reason to believe that God spoke them. It is this primary and fundamental question that I wish to consider, because I believe that in the present day it is not enough to rest satisfied with the very facile answer, "The Bible says it, and the Church has always believed the Bible." If the Church has made the Bible, then of course the Church will believe the Bible, but we shall still have to ask, Why should we believe the Church? But if the Bible has made the Church, then, unless we are Churchmen, we shall have to ask, Why should we accept the Bible? and even if we are, it may be as well to try to find some



intelligible and independent answer to that question.

The question then is, How do we know that God spake these words? and it is a very momentous question; nor can the answer be given in brief, but must be unfolded in many discourses, which shall gradually lead us up to the answer and prepare the way for it; not that to find this answer is the direct object of these discourses, but rather to investigate the way in which it may be found, or at all events one portion of the way by which we may find it.

The answer, however, is briefly twofold,—first, because of the various circumstances attending the promulgation of the words thus given, of the nature of the documents in which they are found, of the way in which those documents have been preserved, and a variety of facts consequent upon and subsequent to all these things, which taken together combine to confirm the truth of them; and, secondly, because of the character and essential nature of the words themselves. With the first of these answers we shall have, except incidentally, but little to do, for it would embrace the very wide field of evidences, Christian and Jewish; but with the latter we shall have very much. Indeed, it is by the investigation of this part of the field of

inquiry thus marked out that we may hope to arrive at some indications of the answer.

We may start, then, with the axiom that if God speaks it is probable that what He says will be worthy of Him. As Luther says, one of His words must contain matter for a discourse. In like manner, we are told of Him who lived and died as the Son of God, that He spake—it was the confession of His enemies—as never man spake. And so here we are told that God said, “I am the Lord,”—that is, “I am Jehovah,” which means, as far as we can tell, “I am He who is and causes to be,” or “I am He who is, and was, and shall be,”—very much as Jesus says in the Revelation, “I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.”\* Now, I am proceeding on the assumption that we have here a true revelation of God, because so only can we determine whether the words are worthy of Him. If they were not spoken by Him, they cannot be worthy of Him.

Milton, whose genius as a poet is second to none, has put many speeches into the mouth of God,—some of them, or parts of them, doubtless of great sublimity; but who shall dare to say that the speeches thus assigned to God are worthy of Him? Nay, does not the greatest

\* Rev. i. 18.

of Milton's admirers, if a sincere and devout believer, read these speeches with somewhat of a sensation allied to shuddering? Do they not seem like a very dangerous tampering with revelation? and do they not therefore serve to show that if Moses spake as Milton spake,—if revelation is of the nature of what we find in Milton,—we have no revelation at all? We either have a word of God, or we have not: if we have not, then there is an end of the whole matter—we need trouble ourselves no further about it; but if we have, then the word of God which we so have must differ generically, and *toto cælo*, from that word assigned to God which we find, for example, in Milton.

Now, it is my contention that we have a word of God of this kind, and, for the present, I am willing to content myself with pointing out the inevitable issue if we have not—namely, that that ends the matter; not however using that issue for the purpose of proving that this of which we are now speaking is a word of God, which would of course be arguing in a circle, but merely as a reason for assuming for the while that it is such a word, and as furnishing the basis for the inquiry whether the alleged word is worthy of Him; for if it is not His, or cannot be, we are under no obligation to

ask the question. If, therefore, God says, "I am the Lord," or, "I am the I AM," what is it that He says? Does He not introduce Himself by name—as, for example, "I am Jehovah"? Is that the point of His revelation? I think not. It does not concern us to know the name of God so much as it does concern us to know *Him*. Thus when Manoah asked the angel who appeared to him (I am obliged now to assume the truth of these narratives, which I for my part heartily and entirely believe), "What is thy name?" the angel replied, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?"\* or a wonder (*pele'*); and so when God says here, "I am the I AM," the revelation is, if we may so say, not one of nominality, but of personality. The revelation is not nominal, but real. It is the unveiling of the self, the coming out of the darkness into the light, out of the stillness and silence of nature into the speech of the word of God, or revelation.

Now, of course, it is a truism to say that we have here a revelation because we have a revelation; nor do I say it: but I do venture to say that the revelation is worthy of God, for the very reason that it does not reveal Him as a name, but it reveals Him as a personal essence. No

\* Judges xiii. 18. Cf. Isaiah ix. 6.

doubt many persons do mistake the revelation, and think that the name Jehovah was the revelation ; but I contend that the revelation consisted not in the name of the Person, but in the Person who uttered the name. It was the *I* that was the revelation, and not the name Jehovah ; and thus, from the necessities of the language expressing or containing this revelation, there is no substantive verb or logical copula, but simply the subject and the predicate, or two subjects in apposition—"I—the Lord." No wonder, therefore, that when Luther came to this word, I, he stuck fast, and was put to a *nonplus*, for it was the I, Himself, and not some name or conception of Him, that stood before him.

And this is what I want you, brethren, to feel—that when God speaks these words it is *He* who speaks them. The revelation consists in the manifestation of Him, in the presentation of His essential personality to your innermost being, to your heart and conscience; and the word thus spoken must infallibly be worthy of Him, for is He not worthy of Himself as nothing else can be? and if He reveals Himself, the revelation is one that cannot fail to justify Him. We may go on repeating for ever, "He is the great I AM," "He is the Lord Jehovah," and the like, but that is no revelation of Him. The revelation is when

He Himself says to us, "I AM:" "I AM the I AM," "I AM who AM."\* Here, then, we have the very surface of simplicity, and the very depth of profundity, for what can be more simple than "I AM," and what can be more profound than "I AM," when it is God who says it?

But, again, you observe, the whole merit and force of this revelation depends upon its being made—that is, upon its reality. If God has not spoken, then we have, and can have, no knowledge of Him; but if He has, then is not this the very essence of all revelation? Is not this what it must come to? Is it or can it be anything at all if it does not come to this? "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the I AM."† If God speaks, is not that, must it not be, what He says?

II. But this is not all, for it is not all He said; He said also, "I am the Lord thy God." Now, it must be borne in mind that this purports to be a revelation made to a whole people, not

\* This last appears to be the exact meaning of the Hebrew words 'ehyeh 'ăsher 'ehyeh, for it may be doubted whether the verb *hayah* would be used merely as a logical copula. It is remarkable that there seems, at all events, to be an allusion to these words, if not to 'ehyeh as an appellative, in Psalm l. 21: *Thou thoughtest wickedly that 'ehyeh was like thyself.*

† Exodus xx. 1, 2.

merely to the lawgiver and the high priest, but to the nation. Behold, then, its majesty: "I—thy God." God has a message for every separate person in the nation. He stands in a definite, clear, intelligible relation to each: "I am thy God." He who is the God of each, reveals Himself to each. It may well draw forth our admiration and wonder that the Bible never attempts to define God, or to tell us what He is, or to prove His existence, which it begins with assuming: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Certain primary ideas are predicated of God,—as that He is light, is love, is a Spirit, is a Father, and the like; but the question of all, What is God? is left unsolved. And why is this? Because the Bible assumes, and rightly assumes, that man as man knows or can with scarcely an effort rise to the knowledge of what God is.

If there is no language without a word for God, is not that conclusive evidence that man knows what God is even if he cannot tell what he means by God? And certainly there is no one of us who does not know what is meant by God, or what God means when He says, I am thy God. If we probe our nature to the very quick, we there find God. Yea, we cannot escape from Him, do what we will. David spoke the lan-

guage of universal humanity when he said, "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?"\* There is no mistake about it, philosophise as we will, and lose ourselves in endless mazes about the nature of the unconditioned, the absolute, and all the rest of it, the little child and the hardened sinner alike know what God is; they are alike conscious of a being who sees into their being, who goes with them where they go, who is privy to their innermost thoughts and actions, who arraigns them before the bar of their own conscience because of their responsibility to Him. We may deny it, we may forget it, we may perplex ourselves when we ask how can these things be; but for all that, so they are, and we know that they are so; and the Bible knows that we know it, and proceeds from the first page to the last on the assumption that we do. Now, since this is so, imagine what the word of that Being must be who not only can say, but has said and does say, "I am the Lord thy God. I, even I, am thy God." We are not dealing with an abstraction, we are dealing with an entity. We are not dealing with some figment of our own brain, some imagination of our own mind; we are dealing with a living Person who speaks, and

\* Ps. cxxxix. 7.



who speaks to us; and not only so, but who has a right to speak to us, who has something to say to us, and desires to enter into communication with us touching His relation to us and our duty to Him.

Now, if there is any revelation from God, it must surely, as far as our faculties can enable us to judge, involve all this, and can imply nothing less than this. And, therefore, the revelation which enlightens us on these points must be so far worthy of Him. We either stand in some relation to God, or we do not; if we do, it must be all-important that we should know what that relation is; but from the nature of the case it is impossible for us to discover what it is unless He tells us. We may form conjectures, but cannot arrive at certainty; this must depend entirely upon His vouchsafing to make us an authoritative communication on the matter. But this is what He did, and this is what He still does, when He says to each of us, as He once said to every individual Israelite in the wilderness, "I am the Lord thy God."

## II.

"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."—EXODUS xx. 2.

BEFORE we can obey any command, it is needful to understand the authority upon which it is given. The child unhesitatingly obeys his parent, because he knows that his parent has a natural right to his obedience. The servant obeys his master, because he knows that such is the condition of the relation which subsists between them. The citizen obeys the law of the land he lives in, because he knows that it expresses the will of the community to which he belongs. But when we travel beyond these familiar and obvious instances to the origin and source of law itself, we have to inquire, What is the authority of law?—How do we know the law to be one that we are bound to obey?—Why are we bound to obey it? These are all of them questions that we cannot avoid asking, if we trouble ourselves to think at all, and it may not be very easy to find an answer to them.

We may reasonably suppose, however, that if the Almighty comes forth out of the darkness which ever surrounds His throne, to give His people a law, He will somehow make it clear to them that the law is one which they are bound to obey. Indeed, it stands to reason that if God vouchsafes to give man a law, it must be man's duty to obey it. There can be no *a priori* question as to whether man owes obedience to God. The proposition is an axiom that man must obey God, if God lays any command upon man. The only question can be whether God really does this—whether the law given in His name is really His law. This is the question with which we have now to deal.

No feature is more striking about the Ten Commandments than this, that they do clearly proceed upon the basis of assumption that God declares Himself and makes Himself known. "I am the Lord thy God; and it is because I am the Lord thy God that thou art under authority to these commandments, for they are the commandments that I give thee." They are not propounded as merely arbitrary commandments which might have been replaced by any others, but as commandments which in the nature of things man is bound to obey. It is because they are commonly felt to be so that

their sway over the allegiance of mankind is so universal and so permanent.

But what do we mean by the nature of things? If man, in the nature of things, is bound to obey any precept, what does that show but that such precept is part of the broad and general plan which governs his own existence and that of the world around him? If it is in the nature of things that he should obey a certain precept, it is much better for him that he should obey than disobey it. This is what we mean—that confusion, distraction, interruption will ensue if he does not obey it. There is no possibility of question that this is the case in many instances. Every one knows that it is so in the matter of health. If a man takes poison, he knows that it will kill him; if he is guilty of excess, he knows that he will suffer for it,—his excess will avenge itself upon him. May it not be so in other matters besides health? It undoubtedly often is. Then this is an indication that there is a principle upon which man is constituted; a principle which may be complied with or departed from by man himself, but not with the same results. It is a great point clearly to recognise and grasp the fact that there is such a principle, for to do so is the foundation of everything. It is not a matter of indifference

to the well-being of man how man acts. One method of action is in accordance with his true nature, another is opposed to it. One moves freely in relation to it, another does it violence.

But after having grasped this fact another question arises,—namely, how far is any such principle a matter of design, how far is it a matter of chance? how far is it a matter of ordinance, how far is it arbitrary? This, it will be observed, is the question of questions, for it involves the difference between atheism and theism. If the nature or constitution of things is a matter of plan and forethought, then there must be a mind to think and plan it. Nothing can be the result of ordinance proper unless it has so been determined and ordained. Even if we adopt the old heathen notion of Fate, it is difficult not to adopt also the other part of it, that Fate is what is decreed or spoken by the gods. But it is not necessary to discuss this question. It is very difficult, I venture to think, to contemplate the undoubted fact that certain things are morally good for man, and certain things do violence to his nature, and not acknowledge that this is the highest evidence we can have, even if it is not conclusive evidence, that the plan or principle thus indicated is the plan or principle of a

mind ordaining it. Once admit this, however, and the revelation of the plan is only the next step below the revelation of its author. And if we could conceive of a being making known the plan as *His* plan, the revelation of the plan would be in some sense the revelation of Himself, and the authoritative promulgation of the principle or precept would virtually be the revelation of Himself, for it would be in fact the revelation of His will, and we could not be made acquainted with His will without being made acquainted with Him whose will it was. For to be made acquainted with His will would be to be made acquainted with Him in His will. The revelation of His will would be the revelation of Himself. This at least would be the case so far as the revelation of the principle or precept was the revelation of His *will*, or indeed of anything properly called a will. If the law of God does not express the will of God, then we may know His law without knowing His will; but if otherwise, then all knowledge of the law of God, and all study of His law, must lead to the knowledge of His will, must lead to the knowledge of Him.

But the point I wish to enforce is that if God makes known His law or His will, He makes known Himself in so doing. The revelation

of the law as His law is the revelation of Him. If, therefore, we can by any process of reasoning arrive at the conclusion that certain laws and principles are in accordance with our constitution, if we can see that there is evidence that such and such precepts correspond closely with our nature, as it appears to be intended to exist, this will be a very strong presumptive proof that the principle so indicated is God's own principle ; that in being the principle of our nature it is the Divine principle ; that if we violate it, we shall not only transgress a law of nature, but shall also sin against God. On the first point we may indeed be certain, we shall find no room for doubt that we have transgressed a natural law ; we cannot arrive at the conclusion that we have sinned against God unless somehow or other God vouchsafes to tell us so, unless He once for all identifies Himself with the natural law which we transgress.

It must of course be understood here that I am using the word nature in a very high and sacred sense, as the very root or foundation principle upon which our moral being is constituted. I take, for instance, the law of truth as that very root and foundation principle that we are naturally intended to obey, in

harmony with which our nature is designed to move, and in concert with which it will alone be satisfied.

II. The question, however, next arises, How is God to make known His will to man, supposing Him to do so in any other way than by awakening his conscience to a knowledge of His law? All such awakening of the conscience must ever be the highest teaching of which man is capable, and all such awakening of the conscience to the majesty of the law, as indeed God's law, is a true revelation of God, and possibly the highest; but it appeals, after all, to one part only of man's nature, namely, to his moral sense: it appeals to his reason only so far as his reason is under the control and guidance of his moral sense. Is there any other way in which God can appeal directly to the mind and reason of man, and that through the experience of his natural senses? Now, there can be no doubt whatever but that such an appeal would be made, and made directly, through the facts of history. The revelation in the conscience is God's immediate appeal, but that appeal is never made without its being strictly an historical appeal, for it is made to one human subject after another in turn—that is, in history; and the record of its being so made becomes matter of history.



For instance, there is a definite point or period of time when God reveals Himself to my conscience, and I become conscious of His revelation ; and there was a definite point or period of time when He revealed Himself to Abraham, to David, to St. Paul. In this sense the moral revelation is necessarily also an historical revelation, but more properly the historical revelation may be regarded as set over against the moral revelation, and as embracing the wide field of prophecy, miracle, and historic fact. It is in this sense that God speaks, and speaks conclusively, for the voice of history is the voice of God. The long result of history is, I conceive, God's direct appeal to the verdict of mankind, through the experience of man. When the long record of the ages shall be read out at the last, then it shall be said, This hath God wrought. Thus we point to the broad facts of Christianity at the present time in proof of the conviction that He hath not dealt thus with any other people, neither have the heathen knowledge of His laws. But these are but parts of His ways, though we are careful to maintain that parts, and inseparable parts, they are. For instance, we are told that when the Decalogue was first propounded it was given in direct connection with an historical crisis. The revelation of God was made through and by

and in connection with an historical event : " I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Then was laid the foundation principle of obligation on the people. Man as the creature of God must owe allegiance to God, his Creator. This is his natural, inevitable bond of obligation. But man has lost sight of this, does not naturally or spontaneously acknowledge it. In order that he may acknowledge it, a special dispensation of Providence is needed. Man must be shown that he is under special obligation ; he must be made aware that the Person to whom he is under special obligation is He to whom he already lies under a natural and prior obligation as his Creator, his God : " I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The appeal here was to an historic fact. Every Israelite who heard the words spoken knew in his own bitter experience the bondage referred to : he had lien among the pots, he had laboured in the brick-kiln, making bricks without straw. The redemption, the deliverance, was a fact : none could doubt it, for every man was a witness to it. The sentiment of gratitude was rife within ; it was gratitude for release, but gratitude to whom ?—It was gratitude to God, to the God

who had wrought the deliverance, who said, "I am the Lord thy God." The Person speaking thus was revealed in two ways ; He was revealed by what He said, and revealed by an historic act : the one was the witness to the other. Was it merely the echo of a voice that was heard in the conscience, "I am the Lord thy God"? No, for the Person speaking had wrought in history. He had brought the nation out of Egypt. He had ransomed every individual from a state of bondage. Was it merely a fortuitous succession of events by which this deliverance had been brought about? Was there no moral significance in, no moral obligation arising out of it, indissolubly bound up with it? Yea, most assuredly, for out of it there came the utterance of a voice which said, "I am the Lord thy God ;" hand in hand with it there came the knowledge of One revealing Himself, asserting Himself,—I AM,—"I am the Lord thy God."

Now, these two points must be borne in mind. First, that the exodus, though it occurred more than three thousand years ago, is an indubitable and undoubted historic fact. It would be as preposterous and absurd to question the occurrence of the exodus as to doubt that of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus. There are doubtless many points about the exodus of great

obscurity—as, for instance, notably its date, the track of the Israelites, and the like; but as to its fact, that admits not of the possibility of doubt. The Israelites were bondmen in Egypt; they were emancipated from that bondage. Considering the position and strength of Egypt, the position and weakness of Israel, the greatness of the deliverance, and the like, it must have been a most remarkable event, that exodus from Egypt. The memory of it lasted all through their history; it is stamped on all their literature; it is not forgotten now—it is celebrated at the present day. If there was nothing miraculous in it, assuredly it was itself little short of a miracle. But, as a matter of fact, being necessarily so marvellous as it was, in all probability it was also full of the marvellous, the appropriate framework of the miraculous, the natural home of the supernatural. We can well believe it was God, and God alone, who brought Israel out of Egypt.

But, secondly, it is no less certain that the earliest promulgation which we have of the moral law is this which is preserved to us in the twentieth chapter of the book of Exodus,—is this which is inseparably connected with the historic fact of the exodus. It is in vain to search all human literature for an older or more authorita-

tive utterance of the moral law. It comes to us here on the authority of Him who brought Israel out of Egypt. What follows then? The law, if it bears witness to Him, as we shall see it does, must be His law. The redemption, upon a fair and adequate survey of all the circumstances before and after, cannot reasonably be ascribed to any other than Him. Both the record of the fact and the knowledge of the law come to us by one and the same channel, and in that channel they are one. Do they both belong to Him, or do they not? That is to say, is it His voice, or is it not, which says to us, which said to Israel, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage"? If it is really His voice, we need inquire no further for the authority on which we are summoned to obey the moral law. It is the highest authority in the universe, for it is the authority which is at the foundation of nature and of the very constitution of our being. We cannot violate this law without violating the very plan and principle of our being, without forcing the moral mechanism of our nature. And if this mechanism is the result of design, is not casual or arbitrary, but is the expression of a predetermined will, then every violation of the law is an act of

injury to the will imposing it. And thus it becomes at least intelligible that the progressive revelation of that will which began with the declaration, "I am the Lord thy God," and was made through and upon the redemption from Egypt, would not cease till it found expression, in the midst of a yet greater redemptive act, in the loving words of intercession, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We cannot obey a command till we know whose command it is we obey. Certainly is that statement pre-eminently true with reference to the commands of God; for the whole essence of obedience consists in the due acknowledgment of Him whom we obey, and we cannot know Him till we behold Him in His form and fashion of transcendent love, and confess that we love Him because He first loved us.

## III.

“And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire : ye heard the voice of His words, but saw no similitude ; only ye heard a voice. And He declared unto you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, even ten commandments ; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone.”—DEUT. iv. 12, 13.

HITHERTO we have seen that the Person speaking from Sinai revealed Himself in two ways, first by what he said, and secondly by an historic act,—“I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt.”\* It will be the object of the following lectures, in considering the Ten Commandments, to develop the former method of revelation ; but I shall endeavour also to show, not only the revelation of the Person speaking in the thing spoken, but, moreover, that our inevitable recognition of the wisdom, truth, and justice of the thing spoken receives its only full explanation and justification in the existence of a Person speaking. I shall endeavour, therefore, to work towards demonstrating the existence of a living

\* Psalm lxxxi. 10.

personal God from the traces of His will, which we cannot but find and acknowledge in our own nature and sense of right.

It may be as well, however, before proceeding further in our inquiry at present, to note more particularly some of the features which characterised the historic giving of the law from Sinai ; such, for example, as those which are here mentioned in the narrative of Deuteronomy.

It is very certain that the first promulgation of the law was accompanied by great natural convulsions, thunderings and lightnings, and thick cloud resting upon Sinai, and the voice of a trumpet and the shaking of an earthquake. These natural phenomena were the birth-throes which ushered in the advent of a law that was to show all mankind guilty before God. There was, however, one remarkable feature that was absent, which the writer thus expresses : "Ye saw no similitude, only ye heard a voice." It seems impossible to exaggerate the importance of this distinguishing mark of the Jewish dispensation,—its abhorrence, if we may so say, of everything like sensuous worship,—its absolute repudiation of the worship of the visible. And of course, if we were at liberty to assume the actual historic veracity of the narrative in question, there would well-nigh be an end to the



argument, which as it is we must endeavour to bring to a conclusion by other means. No one could conceive of a whole nation, to be counted by thousands and hundreds of thousands, encamped on the plains of Sinai, and witnessing the extraordinary natural phenomena which the book of Exodus describes, and audibly sensible of a voice out of the midst of the fire, and louder than the blast of the trumpet or the shock of the earthquake, declaring in tones of thunder the precepts of the moral law, and not confess that heaven and earth were bearing record to the declared will of the Maker and the Judge of all. Given the circumstances, and it would be simply beyond the nature and ability of man to withhold assent to the obvious conclusion. Theoretically, any other course might be eligible, but practically none other could be taken. And yet I am not aware that there is a single syllable here that is not warranted by the letter of the narrative, or indeed that the literal requirements of it can be satisfied in any other way. If the law was given at all from Sinai, this is how it was given; and it is moreover plain that this is how the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews understood it to have been given.\*

\* Heb. xii. 18—21.

What, then, are the independent considerations that lead us to think that the narrative in question is historically true, and that these were the attendant circumstances of the giving of the law?

First, we may mention the clear evidence throughout the sacred literature that the giving of the law was a national memory that could not be obliterated. These two instances need alone be specified now. The words in the final blessing of Moses, "The Lord came from Sinai; . . . He shined forth from mount Paran, . . . from His right hand went a fiery law for them;"\* and then in the seventy-eighth Psalm, "He gave Israel a law which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children,"† referring, apparently, to the command in this very chapter, "Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thine heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;"‡ for we may well suppose that a reference to one part of a given narrative implies the knowledge of other parts in the same narrative, even if not expressly quoted.

But, again, it is not for a moment to be

\* Deut. xxxiii. 2.

† Psalm lxxviii. 5.

‡ Deut. iv. 9.

supposed that the obligations of the moral law were now for the first time incurred. No one can imagine that murder, which was forbidden in the Decalogue, was lawful before the sixth commandment was proclaimed, for, if so, by what law was Cain condemned when he killed his brother Abel? or that theft and violence were permissible before the eighth commandment was enunciated, for, if so, by what precept were the brethren of Joseph condemned when they sold him to the Midianites? All this serves to show that there must have been some special and additional proclamation and inauguration of the law in the infancy of the nation of Israel, which somehow or other put them as a nation into a new and fresh relation to it, and which served throughout their national existence to make them feel proud of the knowledge and possession of the law. Moreover, it was this particular code, and not any other, nor any other form of this, that was Israel's peculiar boast; and the only two versions of this that we possess are alike in the details of natural phenomena that accompany them.

And then, again, we are led onwards to a further point, which is the extraordinary language used by the lawgiver when he says, "And He declared unto you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, even ten com-

mandments.”\* Now, here is the introduction of an entirely new idea. The law is spoken of as a covenant—that is to say, an agreement between two parties. But who were these? One, it is manifest, was the nation; but who was the other? Was it, or could it have been, Moses? He is spoken of in the New Testament as the mediator of this covenant, which at least represents the way in which he was regarded in St. Paul’s days; that is to say, he stood between the people and the Person with whom the covenant was made; but the Person with whom the covenant was made was the Lord. Moses was careful to impress upon the people the fact that the covenant was with God. There is not a trace anywhere that he wished them to think, or that they thought, that the covenant was with him, or that they owed him the obligation of their obedience. Once, indeed, in the course of the history, at the smiting of the rock, the dark vision of self rose up before his mind, and obscured the God in whose name he acted; and the result was that he was for ever precluded from all hope of entering the land of promise, or bringing to a successful issue the labours and aspirations of his life. Is there any one who can dare to say that there is any

\* Deut. iv. 13.

evidence that Moses was acting in the power of his own personal influence and for his own personal ends in doing what he did? If so, the inevitable question, which cannot be answered, arises, How was Moses personally to be advantaged if every individual in the congregation of Israel should rigidly and minutely perform every injunction of the Decalogue? We are constrained, therefore, to consider more patiently the full significance of this word covenant. The laws of the Decalogue were a covenant between the Lord and His people. What did that imply? It seemed to imply that the people's knowledge of the law was a witness, token, and evidence that there was and had been One who was dealing with them, One who was invisible, but One who had made His voice heard, and that amid the thunders of Sinai. We have seen, however, that the mere knowledge of the law which forbade murder and theft was not enough to do all this, because the conception itself was new, or at all events new as it regarded the nation. They were taught, indeed, that God would establish His covenant with their forefather Abraham and his seed after him for ever; but here they were themselves witnesses of that which made them inheritors of Abraham's covenant. Why should they regard themselves in this new relation?

why should they as a people suddenly have become alive to the new position in which they stood? and why should they regard the moral law as the witness of this relation, unless there had been something peculiar and highly exceptional in their new relation to this moral law? Now, the circumstances attending its promulgation on Sinai, if they actually occurred, would, every one must admit, completely account for this. We find, then, in the fact that Israel was taught to regard the possession of the law as the token of a covenant between them and the Lord their God an independent indication that there had been something special and emphatic to bring about this novel conception of their relation to it and its bearing upon them.

Let us put the case that Moses had successfully brought his people out of Egypt, of which there is and can be no doubt, as we saw in the last lecture; that, having led them safely through the Red Sea to the wilderness of Sinai, he had begun to inculcate upon them the supreme importance of the moral law. Would this be sufficient to induce them to make their boast in that law, or to elevate their minds to the conception of it as the mark of a covenant with God? Surely it is no such easy matter to instruct a whole nation. Let any one who has

had practical experience in teaching say whether it is an easy matter to infuse into the minds of any body of men the knowledge of primary and elemental truths. Does not every one know that whatever may be done with individuals, the moral discipline of a body is no easy task. We have heard of one in our own times who performed the unexampled feat of educating his political party to the accomplishment of great and brilliant achievements; but what is this, or anything that can be named beside it, compared with the task of making an impression on the heart of a nation so deep and abiding as that which undeniably was made when Israel received the knowledge of the Ten Commandments at the hands of the mediator Moses? That one act alone is sufficient to place him in the very front rank of the world's greatest men, and of those who have most influenced mankind;—if, indeed, it does not place him second only to the adorable name of Jesus Christ. But when we consider the character of the materials on which Moses had to work,—that the people were but recently emancipated from the hard bondage of Egypt,—that they were a people that had but recently emerged from a condition of slavery, and had but newly acquired the consciousness of national existence,—that whatever national

characteristics they possessed must to a large extent have been coloured and influenced by their surroundings in Egypt,—when, I say, we consider all this, and even more than this, is it not patent than an impression so deep and abiding as that which was wrought by Moses on Israel with regard to the law could only have been produced under circumstances which would have been naturally favourable in the very highest degree to producing it? Every man can at once see that the circumstances narrated would have been of all others the most favourable; and may it not well be questioned whether any others would have been adequate? But if so, is not the Law itself, and its known acceptance by the nation, the best and fullest proof and confirmation of the conditions under which it was given? Can we not well believe, if we had any difficulty before in the abstract, that the Lord spake unto Israel out of the midst of the fire?—for the mountain burned with fire, they heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude, only they heard a voice. And that which He declared unto them was the token of a covenant which was made between them and the living and true God; and the law which they heard and received was a witness to Him who made it.



Two principal objections may seem to arise here, with the answer to which we may conclude. The first is, that if the giving of the Law was actually as a matter of fact accompanied by these tremendous convulsions of nature and miraculous phenomena, how is it that the nation of Israel was invariably so regardless of the Law? Can we suppose that any one who had witnessed such terrific manifestations of Divine and supernatural power would ever lose the effect of them? Surely the question itself manifests profound ignorance of the human heart. Is there no one who ever passed through the terrors of shipwreck, or the perils of a forlorn hope in the imminent deadly breach, or the horrors of an earthquake, whose life did not at all times afterwards move in strict conformity with the moral law? Is there no one who has made pious resolutions when lying on what was to all appearance his death-bed, who has afterwards been found forgetful of them? But if so, why may not the majority of the Israelitish nation have been as stiff-necked and hard-hearted as their lawgiver says they were, even though he could also say, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of

us here alive this day. The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire!" \*

But, secondly, even supposing that all these marvellous physical phenomena accompanied the giving of the Law from Sinai, according to the narrative, yet, after all, what guarantee have we that they really were supernatural, and how does it affect us if they were, seeing that they are contrary to all our experience? Now, it must always be borne in mind that, granting the actual occurrence of the truly supernatural in history, the evidence of it, though sensible at the time it occurs, can never afterwards be other than matter of testimony. Granting hypothetically the actual occurrence of a true miracle, its evidence is necessarily limited to those who were its immediate witnesses. Unless the supernatural act is continuously prolonged, it cannot be continuously witnessed, so that we ourselves may be immediate recipients of its evidence. Its weight in our case must be experienced, so to say, at second hand. Unless a miracle is wrought for our special benefit, if we are to have the benefit of it at all, it can only be through the testimony of others. But it can hardly be denied that, in the circumstances supposed, the

\* Deut. v. 2, 3, 4.

testimony of the supernatural would be valid and confirmatory. Nor are we consistent in objecting to the temporary character of the evidence derived from the supernatural if we depreciate the value of it in the abstract. It either has *a* value, or it has none. If it has none at all, then we should demand conclusive evidence that it has at no time been a concomitant element in the revelation of God ; but as we have seen, for instance, in the matter of the giving of the Law, there is evidence that it was then such an element, in which case it must be an integral part in *His* method of dealing with His creatures who made use of it as the agency whereby He spake these words, and said, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt."

## IV.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”—MATT. xxii. 37—40.

BEFORE proceeding to consider in detail the separate precepts of the Ten Commandments, it may be as well to bear in mind the way in which they were summed up by our Lord, and the importance which He attached to them. Their original division into two tables very plainly indicated the appropriateness of arranging them under two heads; and there were not wanting special injunctions in the old law which showed that their ultimate purpose was only fulfilled by *love*. But this latter was the great revelation of Jesus Christ, who lived and died to show that only by love was the fulfilling of the law, and that the very *end* of the commandment was love.

We have then, now to mention, first, the naturally *two-fold* division of the Law, that

though the commandments are ten in number, they are only two in object, and only one in principle. The first four commandments direct the course of love towards one object, which is God; the last six towards another, which is man. Speaking generally, the first four commandments inculcate religion, and the last six morality. It is part of our object to show the inseparable connection of these two—that one is based upon the other, and that one involves the other. Nor is it unimportant to observe the order in which they are arranged. Our Lord tells us distinctly, speaking of His summary of the first four, that *this* is the *first* and great commandment; while of the last six He says, “And the *second* is like unto it.” But there can be little doubt that, in so doing, He not only implied and asserted the fact of a revelation, but also that His statement was in direct opposition to much of the thought of the present day. As a rule, no one nowadays denies the authority of the moral law—that is, of the obligation we are under to the precepts of the second table; but many persons are staggered at the requirements of the first, and with good reason, for it is obvious that if we are under any obligation to the Lord our God, there not only must be a Lord our God to be under obligation to, but

also He Himself must have given us some knowledge on the subject. But this is exactly what we mean by revelation, namely, that we have some knowledge in these matters which we did not discover for ourselves, that was not the result of invention, or reflexion, or logical conclusion, or the like, but was actually imparted to us by revelation, by the deliberate act of God condescending to teach, inform, instruct, and educate us by a method of special intervention.

It is certainly of a piece with all our Lord's teaching that He declared this, and it must never be overlooked that in estimating the relative importance of the precepts of the two tables He distinctly gave precedence to those of the first.

How is it, then, that in the present day there is an undeniable tendency to reverse His estimate, and to lay the greater stress on the requirements of the second? The answer is not far to seek. Because men have ceased, so far as this is the case, to believe in religion, and have determined, in despair, to make morality a substitute for it. But if our Lord's teaching is correct, morality is, and can be, no substitute for religion, though it must be an indispensable supplement to it. Love to the Lord our God

is the first requirement ; love to our neighbour the second. One is like the other, but one is subordinate to the other.

We cannot, moreover, fail to observe that the very terms of the requirement are not without their bearing on the subject: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart." But how is it possible to comply with any such precept? Is not love in its very nature the freest of all impulses? We cannot love upon command. If I am told that I must love such and such a person, I may try to do so, but it is quite possible I may find it very hard indeed ; and if I am told to love him with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength, it is only too evident that it will become absolutely impossible. But if I am told thus to love a person whom I do not know, the command will become little less than absurd and preposterous. Wherein, then, lies the difference when the Person whom we are bidden to love is the Lord our God? Is it not clear that the difference is a primary and essential one, inasmuch as He is a Person whom it is supposed we do know? But how do we know Him?—only because He has made Himself known to us. He had made Himself known to Israel by the acts that He had wrought for Israel. He has made Himself known to *us* even

more conspicuously and definitely by sending His Son among us, to live as we live, and to die as we die.

The teaching of revelation, then, uniformly, is, "We know Him because He hath known us ;" so we find Moses saying, "He is thy praise, and He is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things which thine eyes have seen ;" \* and in like manner Samuel, "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart, for consider how great things He hath done for you ;" † and in the later volume of revelation, "How after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God ;" ‡ and again, "If any man love God, the same is known of Him ;" § and, lastly, "We love Him because He first loved us." || All this shows that the act of knowledge on our part is preceded by an act of knowledge on His ; and this shows, further, that the act of knowledge on our part mainly resolves itself into that of acknowledging the act of knowledge on His. There is, therefore, an organ in us which is capable of perceiving the act and operation, the presence and the power of God. The action of God may be the same towards two persons : one of them

\* Deut. x. 21.      † 1 Sam. xii. 24.      ‡ Gal. iv. 9.

§ 1 Cor. viii. 3.      || 1 John iv. 19.



will acknowledge His action, the other will not. The one of them truly learns to know God ; the other denies that there is any God to know, or that the action of God affords sufficient ground for knowing Him. Now, in point of fact, in sending His Son Jesus Christ, God has acted in the same way towards all mankind, but there are those who acknowledge His action, and there are those who do not acknowledge it. Those who do, know Him ; those who do not, declare that they know Him not, or declare that they have no means of knowing Him.

It is farther to be observed, then, that the Law was never proposed as an end in itself, but as something which witnessed to a further end, and which would not in its intention be carried out so long as that further end was unattained. This was the radical error of the ancient Jews, that they lost sight of this further end in jealousy for the precept as a precept. They regarded the Law as an end in itself, and entirely overlooked the fact that its object was a further end, and that this end was love.

But if this is the case (that the end of the Law is love), what a sublime vision it calls up of the ultimate purpose and destiny of man ! If it can be shown that the Law is in strict

accordance with the voice of nature, then what follows but that the very constitution of man and the purpose of his existence is with a view to love? Man was constituted to love his fellow-man, and man was created to love God. The happiness of the race will never be complete till this constitutional principle is universally carried out ; and the ultimate destiny of man will never be achieved till he is completely absorbed in the love of God. All experience bears witness to the truth of these statements. The one solitary bane of man's intercourse with his fellow-man is the violation of the law of love, and the observance of this law would at once turn the earth into a paradise ; and the only object which man can set before himself in idea with the slightest promise or prospect of satisfaction, and with the certainty of its never failing or falling short, is the eternal realisation and fruition of the love of God.

Thus the Law in its principle provides for the entire satisfaction of the heart of man. The Law deals with man as a being with a heart. It does honour to this characteristic of his nature. It does not make provision for his intellect, knowing that the world itself contains ample provision for that. The works of God in nature furnish an inexhaustible treasury and storehouse

for the exercise and development of the intellect ; but what of that if the *heart* is left unsatisfied ? All man's discoveries in that case will but reveal the greater vastness and profundity of his unsatisfied and insatiable longings. If God left man but the works of His hands, and withdrew Himself, He would give him a stone when he asked for bread ; but this is exactly what He has not done. He has said, with all the distinctness of the old Law : It is not the shadow, but the substance, that you want ; it is not the husk, but the kernel, that will satisfy you ; it is not the robe, but the majesty behind it, which it hides and symbolises, that is worth your adoration. And so the voice of the Law is, "I am the Lord thy God, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."

And this law needs but to be propounded, for the whole nature and reason and heart of man to acknowledge its wisdom and to confess its truth. What is nature at her best and fairest unless there is a living God behind her ? She is but a shrine forsaken of its God ; the beauty of a perfect form without the breath of life to animate it. What man really wants is a worthy object on which to lavish his affections. His Maker alone is such an object. Hence the wisdom of the

precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart."

In this way alone can we justify to ourselves the act of God in the creation of man. If God made man as a creature of infinite capacities for pain and bliss, and placed him in a mixed condition like ours with the knowledge that in the large majority of cases he would inherit the pain and lose the bliss, how are we to reconcile this with the character of a merciful Being? But if God made man with the purpose that he should love Him to all eternity, and find his happiness in loving Him, we want no other proof of His mercy and loving-kindness. God created man out of love, that man might be blessed in loving Him. He made known to him His love, and set it before him as his highest aim and worthiest object: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart." Verily to do this is to live with the life of God, for it is to live in the love of God, and God is Love.

And the Lord tells us, further, that on this double law of love, on these two commandments of love to God and love to man, hang all the law and the prophets. Now, what does this imply? It implies that these two commandments are the fixed nail or peg which

supports all the law and the prophets. The authority of the law of love does not depend upon the writings of the law and the prophets, but their writings depend on it. There is no doubt a very important and profound principle involved here. It is not the authority of the man that lends authority to his message, but his message that gives authority to him. All the world is prone to think otherwise; the world is ever for calling men Rabbi, Rabbi. Christ told His disciples not to suffer themselves to be called Rabbi, Rabbi. He who was despised and rejected of men said of His own teaching, "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"\* There is no authority that is higher than the authority of truth, for the authority of truth is the authority of God. If a thing is true, it matters not who has said it, for if it is true God says it. Now, the command to love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, is a primary truth of this nature. It is true, not because Moses said it, nor even because God said it; though if God said it, that would show it to be true, because God cannot lie; but it is mainly true because it is the truth, and it is made known to us because it is the truth, and because it is the truth all the law

\* John viii. 46.

and the prophets bear witness to it; they declare and confirm its truth, but they do not make it to be true,—God makes it to be true, for it is in accordance with that fundamental principle on which He has created and constituted man, and on its truth depends the truth of all the law and the prophets; so that if it is not true they are not true; but if it is true, then is their truth established, for all that they have said is in accordance with this truth.

And surely every time the truth of this twofold precept is brought home to the individual heart and the conscience it comes with the force of a revelation: the light that accompanies it disperses the darkness on every side and reveals to us God. The Law is not a lifeless commandment; as such it has no power but to kill: it is the voice of a living Person. He comes forth out of the darkness to tell us that He lives, and to tell us that He loves, and that He desires our love. The Law cannot be known in this its life-giving capacity without a revelation—a true revelation. If it thus comes home to your heart, appealing to your affections, winning your love, speaking to you of One who loves you, who is Himself worthy of love, then that is a revelation to you. The revelation on Sinai was not more real; for of this reve-

lation it may be said, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you, but your Father which is in heaven." Now, the function of all the law and the prophets was neither more nor less than this—to minister to and to bring about this revelation. The revelation did not hang upon them, but they hung on the revelation. They did not make the revelation, but the revelation made them. Similarly, I have always thought Lessing's maxim profoundly important to be borne in mind, though it may not perhaps express the whole truth, as indeed it does not profess to do, that "the Gospel is not true because evangelists and apostles preached it, but apostles preached it because it is true." The Gospel rests upon its own truth, and not upon the truth of even inspired men. It was the truth which inspired them, and they were inspired with the truth; but if we would be the better for their inspiration, we must *share it*. We also must be inspired with the truth. There must be a revelation of the truth to us, and the revelation of the truth will be the revelation of God; and God cannot be apprehended as a living God, as a God who lives and loves, who lives and loves us, and manifests His life in loving us, without a revelation, whether it be the silent revelation which mani-

fest His hidden glory to the secret believing soul, or the revelation of fire and earthquake, storm and tempest upon Sinai, or the revelation of expiring love stronger than death upon the accursed tree of Calvary.



## V.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

EXODUS xx. 3.

WHO is the person addressed? and who is the person speaking? There can be no adequate treatment of this first precept of the ten which does not endeavour to find an answer to these two questions; and the answer to the first must depend upon the answer to the second, which we must therefore deal with first.

The principle affirmed in this commandment is that which was utterly opposed to all the religious notions of the ancient world. Fifteen hundred years before our era, turn where we will, with one exception, the only idea of religion was the worship of gods many, and lords many. In Egypt, the country from which the children of Israel had just been emancipated, the worship of many gods prevailed to an enormous extent; and as far as we can tell from the traces which survive to us of the religion of other nations, the belief in one God only was a thing utterly unknown.

As a matter of fact, however, the enunciation of a contradictory principle is plainly stated here ; for the opinion which might perhaps be advanced, that the *existence* of other gods was not denied, but the *supremacy* of one God was enforced, is nothing to the point, inasmuch as it is not their abstract existence which is dealt with, but their existence in the mind of the worshipper, and their influence over him. Just as when we ourselves repeat this commandment nowadays, no one for a moment thinks of the actual entity of other gods, but only of a condition of mind in which it would be as though they had an entity : or as when St. Paul says, speaking of the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, that their god is their belly, or their belly is their god, he does not imply that their lower nature had any existence as a god, but only that their subjection to it was as if it had been to them a god.

It is needful to enter this caution because otherwise there will not be wanting those who will affirm of this command, that it does not explicitly deny the existence of more gods than one.

On the contrary, we believe that a principle is declared here which is fatal to the existence of any gods but one. From the first page of

the Bible to the last, this is the doctrine that it teaches, that there is but one living and true God. Throughout the history of Israel from first to last, sunk as the people were from time to time in the degradation of idolatry and the worship of false gods, this was the fact from which they could not escape—that there was one God, the God of their fathers, who claimed their allegiance, and was the strenuous and determined foe of every rival god, who could have no recognition, and therefore no existence, before His face.

And if we ask ourselves what is the meaning of this belief in one God only, and how is it to be accounted for, as arising out of, or existing among, many beliefs which acknowledged many gods, we shall find it very difficult to answer the question. Take the case of Abraham, who was born and bred in the faith of other gods. At a definite period of his life, we find him the faithful servant of the one God. Who had taught him this faith? What had brought him to the knowledge of it? No religious change we can conceive can be greater than that from the belief in many gods to the belief in one. But this was the change experienced by Abraham in the infancy of the world. This was the faith inculcated by Moses in the first commandment.

Historically, we do not find any independent instances of the belief in many gods *developing* into the belief in one. The tendency is rather the other way ; so that at Athens, the eye of Greece, there were gods in every street, and altars to every god. What we *do* find is simple forms of worship and belief, degenerating into highly complex forms, and these, again, crumbling to pieces, and leaving behind them no faith in any god. But we do not find the belief in one only God arising spontaneously out of the decay of the worship of many gods. The case of Mohammedanism, which may occur to some, is nothing to the point, because that was distinctly not an original, but a derived religion, standing on the old historic foundations of Judaism and Christianity.

And yet, after the experience of well-nigh four thousand years, what is the verdict of mankind in this matter? Among the most cultivated, the most thoughtful, and the most enlightened, the question is no longer between many gods and one God, but only between one God and none. As far, therefore, as it is possible for man to be the judge of his own belief, the decision of mankind is unmistakably in favour of the old faith of the Hebrews as inculcated by the first commandment. And we are told by

the students of physical science that the same is undeniably the teaching of nature: everything leads up to unity of principle in the operations of nature, to the predominance of one mind, if any mind is recognised, but at all events not of many. Nature emphatically declares that, vast and illimitable as her domain is, there is no room in it for more gods than one. The power which holds the planets in their course is the same as that which brings forth the flowers in their season and restrains the raging of the sea. The laws of gravitation and attraction are universal in their sovereignty, and the principle that holds sway is one, and therefore the mind which the principle expresses is one. If, therefore, there is any primary truth of which we can be absolutely certain, it must be this, that God is one, so that, as St. Paul expresses it "to us, there is but one God."\* And if we proceed from experience and from nature to the investigation of our own hearts, we shall still find the result the same. That the nature of man is one under every variety of circumstance is an indisputable fact; and that our personal consciousness, if it acknowledges any God, can acknowledge only one, is an assertion that can hardly be called in question. The reason, then, the

\* 1 Cor. viii. 6.

wisdom and the truth of this first and great commandment is confirmed to us on every hand.

But if this is so, as it manifestly is, another question arises—namely, this : How was it that between three and four thousand years ago Moses was enabled to anticipate the ultimate decision of nineteenth-century science and philosophy, and that, too, at a time when all the world was against him, and every one thought otherwise? Surely this obvious fact suggests a very strong presumption that the discovery was not his own, or even that of his forefather Abraham ; but that, as he said, and as the nation believed, he had it from God, so it was verily and indeed God who gave it him.

But then I thoroughly believe we do the first commandment great injustice when we regard it as simply inculcating the worship of one God, or as formulating the proposition that there is but one living and true God. I believe the first commandment is something vastly more than this, and that until we apprehend it in its higher and further significance we shall entirely fail to understand it.

What, then, is the first commandment? In its literal form it runs thus : "There shall not be to thee other gods before my face." It is

the revelation to the personal consciousness of the absolute claims of an ultimate Personal Being—of a supreme I. God says, “I am,” and in saying that He says virtually, “There is none beside me.” Now, we know perfectly well, our own reason assures us, that if this is the case it must be so. If God *is*, then no one else *is*, in the sense in which *He* is, for the being of every one else must depend upon *His* being. But is not this what nature says to us, what science says to us, what experience says to us, what history says to us,—what, in point of fact, the scribe said to Jesus, “There is one God, and there is none other but He; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices”? \* I repeat that if it is so we instinctively feel, and cannot but feel, that this must be the case. If God is, then no one else is, except in dependence upon Him. The notion, then, of other gods besides *God* the Lord, is an impossibility,—it is a contradiction in terms. Nor did we need a revelation to tell us this; at least, so it would seem, for we can see it for ourselves, unless indeed it be one of those primary truths, obvious enough when once pointed out, but by no means

\* Mark xii. 32, 33.

obvious to discover, and if so, our sense of its truth would tend to show that we had it by revelation, not that, because we see it to be true, we needed no revelation to make us at the first aware of its truth. But be this as it may, I contend that the true revelation lies further back, albeit it may lie also nearer at hand, for the true revelation lies here: "There shall be to thee no other gods *before my face*." It is the personal assertion of the Personal God,—the assertion that He is at once present and personal, conscious and seeing, living and the source of life, cognisant and judging. Now, this is knowledge, which, reach us how it may, we cannot have without a revelation. It just transcends the point to which reason and experience and nature all alike bring us, but at which they leave us. It goes further, it rises higher, it is independent of all, although, perchance, it may be confirmed by all. It is the conclusion at the verge of which science and philosophy alike stumble,—not, however, because it is so far off, but because those faculties and methods overreach themselves in endeavouring to attain it.

And therefore, as I said, though the revelation lies further off, it also lies nearer at hand. It is near to the heart of a child. Speak to a



child of God, and the quick perceptions of the child anticipate you, for he apprehends instinctively the Being of whom you speak ; the idea is no more inconceivable than the idea of fatherhood, pure and simple, is inconceivable, and He is the ultimate Father. Speak to a child of heaven, and it is like speaking to him of home ; for it is whence he came from, and he knows it, although manifestly and naturally he cannot, with his feeble powers, compass the illimitable thought.

This revelation, then, is one of the things that are hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. But when we become as little children, it is revealed unto us, and the acceptance of the revelation makes us little children, for there can be no father except in relation to a child ; and when God is acknowledged as our Father, we become His children.

It is simply impossible, then, that the majesty of the law can be apprehended till the Person giving it is apprehended. The recognition of the law is the recognition of the Person. There is no obedience due if there is not one to whom it is due. He says to us, " It is due to me ; " and when we are conscious of Him, we are conscious that the obedience is due to Him, for our whole nature rises up and proclaims it with one consent.

We have arrived, then, at something like an answer to the question with which we first started. The Person speaking is God. He speaks when He makes us conscious of Himself; and when He makes us conscious of Himself, it is His voice that we hear, it is His face that we see. But the voice is not one that we create for ourselves, nor is the face one that we imagine for ourselves, any more than the child who acknowledges his father creates his father, or makes him to be his father by acknowledging him. The eye sees the light and sees the sun, but the sun and the light are not creations of the eye—the eye is simply the organ created for apprehending them; it witnesses to their existence, it does not cause them to exist. So faith is the organ or faculty which apprehends revelation. It is revelation that appeals to faith, and calls faith into operation, but is not created by it.

We see, then, that it is God, and God only, who makes us conscious of Himself; and when He does this, He reveals Himself to us. It matters not how He does it, for the result in all cases is identical, and it is the result that is important. If we had no witness in ourselves to the revelation, it would be nothing to us if God revealed Himself to Israel on Sinai, or if

we believed that He so revealed Himself. The revelation must be repeated in our own case. The commandment must come with power to our own hearts, as the voice of the living God, as deriving all its authority from its being the voice of the living God, and as alone to be accounted for in all its influence over us by being in very truth His voice.

But no sooner is it thus apprehended, than the universality of its authority is immediately apparent. "*Thou* shalt have no other gods before me" must be addressed to every living creature of the living God; for if He is one in His being, they also must be one in their allegiance. There can be no districts in His universe not subject to His law. Thus the very first germ of the kingdom of heaven is to be discerned in the very first precept of the ten: "*Thou*, whosoever thou art, and wheresoever thou art, shalt have none other gods before me. I have made thee for myself, and it is I alone who can fill thy heart."\* And so man may make to himself other gods of gold and silver, wood and stone, of lands or houses, lusts or passions, honour or gain, success or ambition, pomp or ease, taste or intellect, or what not, but sooner or later they will prove themselves to be verily no gods.

\* "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Ps. lxxxi. 10).

It will not be a question of their entity, but of their ability to help. Whatever entity or existence the very best of them may have, will be but the faint coruscation of His glory; and will fall away like sparks from a burning mass to be quenched in perpetual night.

This, then, is the ultimate principle of all religion, and the foundation of all morality,—the recognition of the being of God as the only living and true One. He is the first and the last. If we know Him, we know all that we can know for we know the origin of all life and the end of all existence, the fountain and source of all law, and the reward and recompense of all obedience. But if we know Him, it is because and only because, He has made Himself known to us. We have not discovered Him, but He has called us to the knowledge of Himself; but it is a knowledge that is commensurate with faith. We can only know Him in proportion as we believe in Him. Faith is the organ by which we perceive Him, even as the eye is the organ by which we perceive the light or behold the sun. Thus His revelation may be never so real, it may be accompanied with cloud and tempest, as at Sinai, and attested to us by the submission and allegiance of a whole nation but unless we bow our own hearts before

with all the abandonment of self-surrender, it will be an unmeaning spectacle or possibly a delusive voice to us. And for this reason, that we shall not duly recognise its majesty until we implicitly believe its love. We shall be in no condition or temper to comply with the absolute and all-absorbing command, "Thou shalt have none other gods before *my face*," till we have learnt to believe that the God who thundered upon Sinai and caused the light to shine out of darkness, is He who hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

## VI.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

EXODUS xx. 3.

THE questions we considered in the last lecture were, Who was the person here speaking? and Who were the persons addressed? The question we must now consider will be of a more directly practical nature—namely, the subject-matter of the first commandment itself, the essential meaning and force of the substantive prohibition.

The Lord forbids the recognition of any other gods before Him, the acknowledgment of their existence, and the fact of their worship. If we wish however to understand the commandment, we must beware especially of regarding it merely as a commandment, an arbitrary imposition or bare law. The commandment must be taken as expressing a will. It is not the will of the Lord our God that we should have any other gods before Him. He has not merely issued this prohibition for the sake of issuing it, or of having it observed, but He

has made it known to us as the expression of His will—of what, as regards ourselves, is His personal desire. It will make all the difference to us in our estimate of the law, if we duly apprehend this truth. It is not a barren precept, but it is the reflex of a mind, and the expression of a will. God makes Himself known to us by this declaration of His will. It is the first result of the assertion of His personality, of the revelation of His being. "I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have none other gods but me. This is my desire, this is my will." So much, I think, we may safely affirm of the Law and its promulgation.

But then comes another point, not one whit less important. For is it not self-evident that the only motive God can have in giving or making known a law is the well-being of man? But as He does not impose any law for the mere sake of imposing it, so He does not impose or make known any law for His own sake. It is of no benefit or advantage to the Most High whether His law is known or not. Many of His laws are unknown at the present day; they will supply material for our investigation throughout eternity. It is of no benefit or advantage to the Most High whether His law is observed or not. He is independent

of His own law, except so far as it reflects the character of His own mind ; and most assuredly He is absolutely independent of the observance of His own law by His creatures. His glory is alike undiminished and unimpaired, whether His law is obeyed or violated. Manifestly, therefore, He cannot make known His law for the purpose of securing any advantage to Himself. It follows, consequently, that God's only object in giving or making known His law must be the benefit and advantage of man. It is not because God is jealous of His own honour that He has given us this law, but because He is jealous of our worship being misdirected, and because He is jealous of it for our sakes. A moment's reflection will assuredly serve to convince us of this.

When once God has enlightened our conscience with regard to His own being and character, there are certain points relating to His character that we can perceive and determine for ourselves ; and this is one of them, although it may lie outside the explicit utterance of the mere word of Scripture, just as outside the substance of a luminous body or a ball of fire there is a space or district of light or heat which is not the body, but which owes its existence to the body.



But if these positions are valid—and can any one venture to doubt them?—what a flood of light is thrown thereby on God's relation to us, and on our relation to God! The very sole object and purpose that God has in giving us this law, and making it known to us, is because the observance of it will tend directly to our advantage. It is for our good, and for our good alone, that the Lord has given us this law. There is no undue prying into the Divine motives implied in judging thus, because if we duly ponder the matter the law itself reveals the motive. The law is not given to crush man, but to show him the path of life. "I gave them my statutes, which if a man do he shall even live in them." \* "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." †

What, then, is the general bearing of this holy and just and good law? We saw in the last lecture that as God is the only existence, so all things else have no existence except only as they exist in Him. All this fair universe of which our senses are cognisant is His creation: it owes its being to His being: its being is not essential and necessary, like His, but is derived from His, and dependent

\* Ezek. xx. 11.

† Rom. vii. 12.

on His. It may cease to exist, but He cannot. "They shall perish, but Thou remainest, and they all shall wax old like a garment," says the Psalmist, speaking of the visible heavens and the earth, "and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed, but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail."\* It is surely conceivable, and it follows necessarily from our belief in God as the only "I AM," that the whole universe might be blotted out from existence, and leave Him abiding and unchanged, for the obvious reason that such existence as it has is simply dependent on His will. But it is equally manifest that the motion of our desires is constantly limited to the area of this universe. It is therefore a matter of choice whether we will allow them to be so limited, or whether we will transcend the limitations of the creation or the creature, and fix them on the Creator, as their natural home and their ultimate goal. This is the alternative of having no other gods but the Lord, or of worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator.

It is nothing less than this, then, which is the scope of the first commandment. It is calculated to draw men away from the worship of

\* Ps. cii. 26, 27.

the visible to the worship of the unseen ; so that in some sense the first commandment is the most spiritual of all, inasmuch as it is the inculcation of the principle of faith, the encouragement and education of the faculty of belief. There is a natural tendency in us all to make gods of the creature. This commandment reveals the existence of one who is not a creature, but the Creator, who is therefore the true God, the "I AM." It is faith alone which can apprehend this Being. Sense cannot discover or discern Him ; reason cannot wholly find Him out, but only behold Him dimly from afar ; but faith can come into contact with Him, can throw herself upon Him, can feel Him in spite of numbness, and see Him in spite of blindness, and hear His voice notwithstanding her natural deafness. Our natural senses are the faculties by which we become aware of the existence of the outer world ; but we have other faculties, the spiritual counterpart of those, which bring us no message from the outer world, though they reveal to us an illimitable world within. It is to these faculties that the spiritual law appeals as the expression of the will of God, and therefore the conclusive proof of the being of God. Nothing can deprive us of these faculties, because they are part of our natural constitu-

tion. We may dull and deaden them, as we may stop an ear or put out an eye ; but utterly quench them we cannot, so as to make them to be no longer any part of the inheritance of man. For if that were possible, then, indeed, the voice of God would sound in vain, and the revelation of God be made in vain ; but as it is, the promulgation of the law in its majesty, and in the infinitude of its requirements, will always serve to quicken the spiritual sense to which it appeals. The declaration, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me," will arouse the conscience, and stimulate the reason, and quicken the imagination, and appeal to the highest faculties of the whole man, with the force of a presence which is not to be put by, and the authority of a person who is not to be denied.

There is, consequently, this wonderful characteristic about the law, that it asserts itself ; because it awakens a response in our spiritual nature which affirms that it is at once holy and just and good ; and because it does this, it bears its own witness to the God who gave it. We are constituted to hear its voice, for we cannot belie it without belying our own nature ; and when we hear its voice, we recognise it as the voice of God, for we know well that it can be

the voice of no one else, for no one else can speak in tones of such absolute authority.

The requirements of the law, however, as the precept of a God who desires our welfare and has no other motive in inculcating it, mainly resolve themselves into two kinds—namely those of love, and those of fear. God desires our love, which implies our worship, because it is not good for us to love, and therefore to worship, anything else instead of Him, or more than Him. The law virtually says, “He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; He that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.” \* The creature has a great tendency to come between us and the Creator, and to hide the Creator from us; indeed, it always does this unless the Creator asserts Himself as He does in His law, and so reveals Himself.

We are compassed about with mercies; but while we acknowledge the mercies as blessings in themselves, we forget the All-merciful from whom they come, and to whom they are designed to witness. We admire and value the gift, and cry bitterly when it is taken from us; but we overlook the Giver, and utterly forget that He is better—oh, how much better!—than

\* Matt. x. 37.

His gift, and infinitely more worthy of our regard. But this is nothing more than He long ago told us in the first commandment. Whenever the gifts of God cease to testify to us of Him, cease to assure us of a living though unseen Giver, then they are beginning to usurp His place, and we are in danger of making them to be to ourselves other gods beside Him.

And this accounts for the apparent harshness in the accents of the law. We do not like to be reminded of One whom we have unjustly forgotten; it arouses our animosity, and we feel inclined to resent it, more particularly when our mistake involves the substitution of a *thing* for a *person*; and this, as we have seen, is virtually what every person is, whether son or daughter, wife or friend, who is not God. Our hearts are prone to twine themselves around the relationships of life, the duties of life, the occupations of life, the pleasures of life, and its delusive promises. All these things are the palpable, the visible, the tangible; the Being of whom they speak, to whom, if they mean anything, they surely witness, and in whom alone they find their real value and significance, is the invisible; He is the "I AM;" while their name, if it rightly characterised them, would be only this, "We seem

to be." And yet it is first to these semblances that we give our hearts. We love them more than Him who is, and we dislike to be reminded that we do. Is it not, therefore, in love and tender mercy that the Lord calls us from the love and adoration of these outward *things* to the love and worship of Himself? If we were content to receive His gifts only in Him—to accept *Him* when we receive *them*—then we should find that, even when His gifts were taken from us, they were still ours in Him, for nought can separate us from His love, and His gifts were only precious as they were the reflex and expression of His love, which He never withdraws from us, but invites us more and more to rest in and to share.

We see, then, how to worship and serve the creature more than the Creator infringes the love and service of the Creator, and brings about, at all events in principle, the violation of the primary command. But no sooner is it stated thus than it forthwith becomes apparent that the law has not only an authoritative but also a condemning voice. We are one and all verily guilty under this head. There is no denying it. Hence while the law wins us to righteousness with the accents of love, it too surely convicts us of unrighteousness with a

voice of thunder, which itself would be intolerable if it were not for the God of love whose voice it is. But this reminds us that we must not forget the second great requirement of the law, which is that of fear. For the prerogative of the true God is fear no less than love, even though love may contend with fear and cast it out; and thus the commandment which says "Thou shalt have none other gods but me" requires not only that we give to God our hearts, but also that we concentrate in Him our fear.

And I for one feel that herein is one of the strongholds of the Divine revelation. How many things there are in life that we sorely dread! Arduous duty, bitter trials, cruel partings, the animosity of foes, the official coldness and apathy of superiors, the failure or defection of friends, the unkindness of circumstance, the ruthless caprice of accident. God only knows, assuredly, how many times our heart sinks within us at the many difficulties with which we have to contend here, and which even now, it may be, threaten to increase rather than diminish; and doubtless we all have our own spectres of the mind which alarm and threaten us. Now, it is well that we should face these spectres, if so be that we may lay



them ; for rest assured that spectres they verily are, and nothing else ; and we cannot fear *them* if we truly and honestly fear the Lord. For “who is he that shall harm you if ye be followers of that which is good ?”\* There was great cause for that interrogation when the apostle wrote it ; but the experience of many generations has amply confirmed the wisdom of the answer it implies, and that answer is “No one ;” and the reason which is the basis of the answer is because there is only one who is the “I AM,” and we dare not make or imagine to ourselves any other gods or objects of fear before His face. What follows then ?—

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take ;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.”

If it is not an incipient and insidious form of idolatry to yield unduly to the fear of the present or the future, it is at all events a want of faith. The God whom we cannot see is greater and more terrible than the present or future evils which we feel or fear ; but if we fear Him as we surely ought, we certainly need not, may not, fear anything else. The presence of fear is a subtle and mysterious power ; it is one of those facts

\* 1 Pet. iii. 13.

which can only be explained by the fact of our own spiritual existence. But if we have a spiritual existence, it is only because we are the children of the great Father of spirits; and if we are His children, is He not our Father? And if He is our Father, does He not love us as His children with a love which is the pattern of all love, but which knows no pattern or comparison but itself? And shall we not cheerfully, trustfully, manfully, hold ourselves in entire subjection to the Father of spirits, that we may live and not die, that we may walk and not faint,—for He has said, “I am the Lord thy God : thou shalt have no other gods before my face.”

## VII.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”

EXODUS XX. 4—6.

THE second commandment is distinct and different from the first, notwithstanding that certain formularies of the Roman Church merge the two commandments in one. The first commandment contains a general prohibition; the second, a particular and special application of it. The first commandment forbids the worship or recognition of any other gods than one, and of any but the true God. The second commandment forbids the worship even of the true God in a false or unlawful way. It is, therefore, essentially a narrowing in even of the limitations of the first. It consists, more-

over, of two parts, inasmuch as it contains a definite prohibition, and also couples with it a definite and additional revelation of the character of God, and His method of providential government.

Let us then endeavour to pursue these several lines of thought. We cannot fail to notice at the outset the very great historic importance of the second commandment in the history of Israel and of the world. Just as the first commandment at once placed the nation on a higher moral and spiritual level than all the other nations of the world, so did the second commandment mark them out as distinct and separate from all other nations. The conception of a purely monotheistic creed was a vast national inheritance. It was not less so to be the one nation of antiquity that rejected all visible objects of worship. The mere possession, then, of these two commandments, as lying at the foundation of their national law, while the whole world on every side of them was sunk in the worship of the outward and the visible, is a remarkable and significant fact in the history of Israel that irresistibly demands an explanation. How is the fact, as a mere fact, to be accounted for? For some period between a thousand and fifteen hundred years before

Christ, this was the recognised law of Israel. Was it the invention of Israel? Was it the imposition of Moses? How then was the contrast so strong that it offered to the national religion and practice of Egypt? For it would not be possible to find a stronger contrast than that supplied by the religion of Egypt and Israel in this respect. Is there not a very strong presumption that the conception of what every one must feel to be a purer faith was itself a ray of light streaming down from Him who Himself the light that His creatures have conceived? Is not the proof of the revelation the thing revealed? Does not the revelation indicate and justify itself? Does not the revelation witness powerfully that there is One who has revealed Himself?

Again, it was almost a thousand years before the nation itself in whose bosom this revelation was proposed fully imbibed the influence of it. The history of Israel throughout the period of the wanderings, the Judges, and the Kings, was the history of a perpetual conflict with the prohibition embodied in this precept. No sooner was it given with the accompaniments of thunder and earthquake, than the nation lay down before the golden calf that Aaron, the brother of the lawgiver, had himself made.

When Joshua, the great captain of the Lord's host, had brought His people into Canaan, he had to rebuke them severely for the strange gods which were among them. And the time would fail to tell of the various instances of defection during the rule of the Judges and under the monarchy ; insomuch that, following the example of some unscrupulous modern critics, we might rashly, and yet not without some show of reason, conclude that a law could not have been known to Israel which was so continually and so grossly violated. This, however, we are thankful to say, is a paradox that would be too paradoxical to be maintained. Rather is one disposed to observe that the innate and almost insuperable propensity of Israel to worship the outward and the visible showed plainly the wisdom of the Divine mind in anticipating the tendency by the promulgation of this precept.

And one fact is obvious which is undoubtedly to be traced to the influence of the second commandment—namely, that the Jewish nation was altogether barren of anything like artistic skill or taste. Compared in this respect with Egypt, Assyria, and above all with Greece, Israel is simply nowhere in the estimation of the world. However great the world's debt

may be to Israel in other respects, it is under no obligations of an artistic nature. The god-like beauty of the human form had attractions for the chisel of a Phidias and Praxiteles which resulted in the realisation of immortal conceptions; but no marbles from the hand of a Jewish sculptor are to be found in the corridors of the British Museum, for the command was imperative, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth."

This, however, is with reference to the past; but with regard to the present, I suppose there is hardly any commandment that we think ourselves more secure from breaking than this second commandment. And yet is it so? I fear the history of the Christian Church, no less than the history of Israel, has borne witness to the contrary. Whatever may be the origin of idolatry in the case of savage nations, are we quite so sure that it is an impossible sin among the cultivated and the civilised? If in their case it is explained on other principles, is it not notorious that the practical result in both cases is narrowly to be distinguished, if indeed it virtually differs. Is it not a very easy, a very natural, an entirely pardonable thing,

to adopt the crucifix or the cross as an emblem of a truth, a serviceable aid to devotion, and yet practically to find that some part of the devotion, as a matter of fact, does attach to the emblem itself, whether cross or crucifix? It is impossible to visit the high altars and side chapels of Roman Catholic cathedrals, and not feel and see that the border line between the worship of the outward and visible, and the use of it merely as a reminder of something inward and invisible, is perilously narrow, and almost imperceptibly small. Possibly most persons, when straitly interrogated as to the exact place that outward symbols hold in their devotional use of them, would repudiate utterly the idolatrous association; but may not the question naturally arise, How much of this vehement repudiation is due to the interrogation itself?

And I for one am free to confess that I view with the greatest possible distrust the too prominent position that is given in the present day to the sensuous and florid in religious worship; and for this reason, that it is essentially and inherently opposed to the spiritual. There is a very grave misconception abroad as to what is meant by spiritual. The spiritual is not another name for the imaginative, the artistic,



the æsthetic, or even the intellectual. It belongs altogether to a separate category ; it belongs to the domain of the spirit, which is distinct from the mind, as the mind is distinct from the flesh. And here the axiom holds good, "It is the spirit that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing."\* The spirit is not quickened by the flesh, but the flesh is quickened by the spirit. The spirit is not aided by the flesh, but much rather is overlaid by it. Every one feels the need of something to assist him in devotion, to aid him in grasping the invisible. Now, the visible is the vail of the invisible, which serves to hide from us the invisible, if it does not raise us above itself. The only way in which we can apprehend the spiritual is by the organ of the spiritual, which is faith—just as sight and touch are the faculties of the body by which it becomes conscious of the external world. And that which operates on the spirit is the Divine word. So David says, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust : quicken thou me according to Thy word."† This was a condition of spiritual sluggishness. He felt the need of something to revive his spirit, but what he knew would revive it was the word of God. But that which thus lays hold of the Divine word is faith. It is not the province of

\* John vi. 63.

† Ps. cxix. 25.

the senses to quicken faith, but only the province of the word and Spirit of God. The crucifix, therefore, is ineffectual to quicken faith ; for what does the crucifix do ? It witnesses to a past act ; it reminds us of the momentous truth that Christ died ; nay, more, it reminds us of Christ dead. But Christ, as a matter of fact, is not dead ; Christ is risen from the dead ; Christ is alive, and liveth for evermore. If therefore by the use of any symbols we are brought as far as Christ dead, we are not brought far enough, because what we want is union with a Christ who now liveth, which is a reality, and not with a Christ who is now dead, which is a fiction. If faith wants quickening, it is because it needs to apprehend the living, but the only thing that can lead us to apprehend the living is participation in the life. Now, pictures and music cannot give us participation in the life. Pictures enable us vividly to realise historic events ; they represent the past as actually present ; they cannot transport us to the living present. A picture of Christ in His glory might enable us partly to see Him as He is ; but where shall we find such a picture ? and clearly no picture of Christ on the cross can enable us to see Him as He now is. And as for music, that may bring before us fresh worlds of the imagination, may

bring to us tears of sadness or of joy, but we delude ourselves if we expect it to give us participation in the life.

One can see, therefore, somewhat of the reasonableness of the law in its strenuous prohibition of worshipping even the true God falsely.

And strange it is, but yet most significant and appropriate, that in relation to this prohibition we have the revelation of God as a jealous God. That is to say, He is jealous, as was observed in the last lecture, not for His own sake, but for ours. He is jealous for our spiritual welfare, lest we should bow down to objects no matter how æsthetically beautiful, how artistically perfect, how symbolically appropriate, that are unworthy of our high spiritual nature and spiritual destiny. We degrade ourselves, under pretence of elevating ourselves, when we rest in the outward symbol, and do not press on to the inward and living reality. As by a kind of instinct, then, the Church of Rome has fitly obscured and concealed the prominence of this commandment, for with her the symbol has undoubtedly usurped upon the living and the real. Even in the highest act of Christian worship and fellowship, there is danger lest the spirit of the second commandment should be violated by resting too exclusively and tena-

ciously in the memorials of the Lord's Body and Blood, instead of rising through them to living communion with the risen Lamb, and so discerning the Lord's Body.

It would appear, then, that the second commandment strikes at the root of a subtle sin, and one to which we in the present day are by no means free from exposure. All worship that does not answer to the Lord's requirement of worship in spirit and in truth, is a practical violation of the second commandment, for it is the attempt to worship Him on a lower basis who, for our sakes, is jealous of being worshipped otherwise than in spirit and in truth. It cannot be out of place to warn the people of this land against any such possible infringements of this well-known precept. But there is likewise another way in which it may be broken. The great poet of Germany has told us that "as a man is, so is his God;"\* and the Psalmist said, with withering rebuke, "Thou thoughtest wickedly that I am even such a one as thyself."† All conceptions, therefore, and thoughts of God which are unworthy of Him, because not inspired with His spirit, are violations of the second commandment. And thus we see that though after the captivity the house of Israel

\* Goethe.

† Ps. l. 21.

was purged for ever from the grosser and more idolatrous violations of it, they were by no means delivered from a base and sordid idolatry of the mind which dragged God down from His throne in heaven to the mean and despicable standard of those who made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the borders of their garments, and paid tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and worshipped the letter of Scripture while altogether ignorant of its spirit. It is hard to say whether Israel, bowing down to the golden calves of Jeroboam, or the Pharisees, falsely and censoriously accusing Christ, and seeking to catch something out of His mouth, were more conspicuous transgressors of the second commandment in the fulness of its Divine and spiritual scope.

The revelation of the second commandment is not only that of God as a jealous God, but also as a retributive Judge. I suppose there is no thoughtful person who has not stood in awe of the terrible words, "visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." But however this may be, none can doubt their truth. They are to the letter as true now as when they were first uttered three thousand years ago. They express in solemn language the revelation of

Himself which God has stamped upon human society. We see the brand before our own eyes, and know that it is the mark of God. How is the tremendous, undeniable, irreversible sentence of the all-righteous Judge written broadly on nature and on human nature at the present day! It stares us in the face, and we cannot escape from it. This is the terrific revelation of the God of nature; it is the natural testimony to His being a jealous God. He will not suffer His laws to be broken with impunity: therefore He punishes. It seems to me that in the natural punishment of the violation of the moral law, which it is impossible to deny and not regard as a punishment, we are brought to the very confines of One who has revealed Himself, who is a Lawgiver, because He is so conspicuously a Judge. We stand in awe of His judgments; we can see that they are judgments on a broken law. We cannot be guilty of a violated law unless the law has been made known. He has made known the law in making known the punishment of the law. But He who has made known the punishment of the law is identical with the God of nature, and therefore He who has made known the law is likewise identical with the God of nature, because it is in and by nature that the infringement of His

law is punished ; and therefore the assertion of Himself in nature is the echo of His assertion of Himself in the law. But we recognise the natural voice, and bow before its solemnity and majesty, and therefore can we hesitate to bow before Him of whose personal voice it is the echo ? Shall we turn away from Him when He says, "I am the Lord thy God," when we cannot turn away from the truth of what He says about visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation ?

## VIII.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth : thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them : for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”—EXODUS xx. 4—6.

TWO points are directly suggested by the terms of this commandment that I was not able to touch upon in the last lecture. These are connected with the threat and the promise which immediately follow upon the prohibition, the revelation of the character of God which accompanies this commandment. We not unnaturally ask, Why is it that the terrific announcement of God as a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him is attached to the particular precept which forbids the making of any image or likeness to represent Him? This is one thought which claims attention, and the other is the



counter-revelation that is given of God as showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Him and keep His commandments. These two thoughts, then, may well demand our notice to-day. The second commandment more than any other seems to have, if I may so say, something of an historic setting. It is that commandment which is especially concerned with the worship of God. The first deals with the person and being of God, asserting that the true God is the Lord Jehovah, the only existing one, the life of life, the I AM. The second passes on to prescribe the true method in which He desires to be worshipped; but this it does not positively, but negatively,—not saying in what manner He is to be adored, but in what manner He will not be worshipped: “Thou shalt not make to thyself,” and the like.

Now, when we bear in mind the peculiar position of the children of Israel, that they were but just emancipated from the bondage of Egypt, that historically they had left behind them a people and a land sunk and benighted in idolatry, it is impossible not to see that this commandment in its form fits into the historical position of the nation to whom it was addressed; and not only so, for the nation was then especially in a transition state. It was on the way,

not only out of Egypt, but to the conquest of Canaan; and the people it was about to dispossess was to be dispossessed, not for the righteousness of Israel, but for the iniquity of Canaan. It was expressly said that the righteous judgment of the God of the universe was hanging in suspense over the devoted nation,—that long arrears of indignation were accumulating to be poured upon them because of their sins.

Now, we know little or nothing of the religion and religious rites of Canaan before the conquest by Israel, but we do know very much of its moral condition and its abominable vices. And, as was ever the case, the moral degradation of the people was closely connected with its religious worship. The second commandment, therefore, in its form had a special reference to the historic position of Israel in view of the promised and approaching possession of Canaan. The commandment which prescribed the limits of the worship of God, and defined its method, could not but refer to the religious position of Israel, as standing between the redemption from idolatrous Egypt and the conquest and possession of idolatrous Canaan.

The calling of Israel was a holy calling; the destiny of Israel was to teach religion to the

world ; and this being so, the one characteristic feature of its own religion was to be prescribed with special reference to the religion of the nations to which it stood opposed. It is thus plain that the religious position of Israel, from the first, was what may be called a protestant position. In the present day one of the keenest reproaches which are thrown against the name of Protestant, and the cause of Protestantism, is derived from its negative character. Protestantism, it is said, does not affirm ; it simply denies or protests. Now, it is plain that identically the same reproach might be brought not only against the second, but against nearly all the ten commandments. They do not affirm ; for the most part they prohibit,—that is, they deny. Israel was forbidden to worship God as the heathen worshipped Him. Israel was to protest against such worship : his very position and existence was a protest. The history of his redemption and deliverance was such a protest : “And against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am the Lord.”\*

It seems, then, that the form of the second commandment has a singularly appropriate fitness to the historical position of Israel at the time it was given. But more than this, it

\* Exodus xii. 12.

is impossible not to associate the revelation of God as an avenging God with the particular precept to which that revelation is attached ; and this is the first of the two points I want you to notice. God declares that He visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation. As I showed before, it is impossible to doubt this ; we see that it is so with our own eyes. The law which declares it is not abrogated ; the precept is unrepealed. Its transgression is thus avenged at the present day, and will be so to the end of time. The sins of the parents avenge themselves upon the children. You may protest against the equity of it if you please ; you may say it is not just, as Israel did in the time of Ezekiel \* ; but now, as then, it is true, whether or not it is just, and we think it so. But what sins are those which especially avenge themselves on the children ? They are the vices of the blood, the sins and excesses of the flesh ; they are the violations of what is emphatically recognised as the moral law. Other sins, no doubt, are reproduced in the offspring, and are thus punished in the offspring,—defects of temper, defects of character, indolence, sloth, self-indulgence, and the like ; but it is pre-

\* Ezekiel xviii. 25, 29 ; xxxiii. 17, 20.

eminently the sins of intemperance and excess in its widest sense, that not only reproduce themselves, but that avenge themselves in the offspring,—those sins, that is, that are of a gross, sensual, and carnal nature. But then it is exactly those sins—and here is the point—that as a matter of fact are encouraged, stimulated, and fostered by a gross and sensual religion,—a religion that is largely concerned with the outward and visible expression of invisible and intangible ideas. It is very evident that when the religion itself was devoid of an elevating and purifying principle, as was the case with the religion of Egypt and Canaan, the tendency to embody these forms would react upon the character of the worshippers, and tend to their degradation and debasement. But this is not the only point, for the wisdom of God foresaw that even when the religion itself was possessed of a naturally elevating and purifying principle, a like tendency would be followed by a like result, and it was against this tendency that the second commandment was intended to guard. And therefore the revelation of the avenging character of God was fitly joined to that precept which dealt directly with the mode of His worship. God desired His people to offer unto Him a pure and spiritual worship.

He uttered His fulminations against those sins which would be the natural result of the opposite mode of worship, and attached them to that precept which denounced it. No other reason can I discover for the significant fact that the declaration that God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children is embodied in the commandment not to make any image to worship it, than because the habit of doing so will assuredly result in the sins which will bring about inevitably the fulfilment of that assertion.

It may seem, however, a very terrible and narrow view to take of the tendency which has expressed itself in all the more cultivated nations to seek to embody the inner conceptions of the mind in outward forms. Though the literal construction of the second commandment is such as to forbid all exercise or cultivation of the plastic arts, and though it was so interpreted by the nation itself, yet there is little doubt that it was only the appropriation of them to religious purposes that was forbidden. We cannot suppose that painting and sculpture are in themselves forbidden arts, at all events to us, but only that all association of their efforts and achievements with the object of worship is forbidden. There is undoubtedly everything in them which entitles them to the epithet of the

*fine arts* ; they are refining and elevating in their tendency. Every cultivated mind will at once and gratefully acknowledge their humanising influence and subtle ethereal power. But this, it must be allowed, is only on the presumption that other influences are permitted to exercise their influence in like manner. When the cultivation of the mind in other directions is carried on at the same time,—when poetry, philosophy, history, and science also assert their sway, and, above all, when spiritual illumination predominates and is supreme,—the influence of art can be nothing but beneficial ; but it may well be questioned whether the exclusive or predominant cultivation of art would not of itself manifest those tendencies towards the fostering of the gross and the sensual in life and morals which the second commandment of the Law aimed so directly at repressing. At all events, we may well be jealous, since God is jealous, of admitting into too close connection with His spiritual worship those human additions of painting, sculpture, and the like, of which the effect has been in all ages to drag down the worshipper, and confine him to his own level, instead of elevating him to the Divine level.

But it is time to turn to the other consideration which is suggested by the further and final reve-

lation of the second commandment—"showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." Now, this also had, no doubt, an historical aspect. When we think of the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the children of Israel were about to inherit, we cannot but see that it had the force of an assurance that to walk in the steps of Abraham would be to inherit the blessing of Abraham. It also was altogether in keeping, therefore, with the historic position of Israel, and fits in wonderfully with the literary records of the time at which it was given. But for us it has surely a far higher value, if we duly regard its import. God reveals Himself as showing mercy unto thousands. In the seventh chapter of Deuteronomy (ver. 9) this is expanded yet further: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations." He visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, but He keepeth covenant and mercy to a thousand generations.

Thus we see the Law was a revelation of mingled awe and love. It was a partial revelation, and was destined to be itself fulfilled in a



yet higher law which should reveal the perfect love that casteth out fear. It was like the majestic course of the sun upon a summer's day, which at his rising has to contend with clouds that conceal his glory, till by degrees he grows in brightness and the whole heavens are filled with his meridian splendour. But it is, after all, this revelation which is *the* revelation indeed. The revelation of God as a God of power, of terrific might and force and awfulness, is that which lies too often nearest to our senses and to our natural heart. To behold God, and yet more to *trust* in Him as a God of love, as a God of mercy and loving-kindness, as a God whose mercy rejoiceth against judgment, whose love is greater than His wrath as the thousand generations are greater than the three or four, and as a God whose grace much more aboundeth over the abounding sin of man,—this is the special effect of *the* revelation of God which specially requires a revelation, and which revelation has been given by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is something to know God as a jealous God, and to know that He is jealous for our sakes rather than His own; but it is yet more to know that He is a *faithful* God, and that He keepeth covenant with thousands, and to a thousand generations. Now this is assuredly

the feature of God's character that is most abundantly confirmed by the testimony of physical science. Mark you, it is confirmed thereby—it is not revealed thereby; for the revelations of physical science vary as the interpreters of it vary: it is revealed, and revealed only, by revelation—that is, we can only learn it if we accept revelation; and the form in which revelation gives it is a form that is not acceptable to physical science, any more than it is to the natural heart, for God is declared to be a faithful God, and one that sheweth mercy unto thousands; but then it is in them that love Him and keep His commandments. Now, the truth which God declares of Himself, "I love them that love me," is one to which physical science cannot aspire, and to which it gives no testimony; but this is *the* message of revelation—"shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me." Here, then, is the knowledge implied in the love: we can only love him whom we know, we can only know the Unknowable as far as He has made Himself known; but that He has made Himself known up to this point is most certainly implied. And yet more than this is implied—namely, that His love is conditioned by our love, His mercy is shown to them that love Him. This either is or is not a fact: if it is not

a fact there is an end of the whole matter, we may pass it by with total and supreme indifference; but if it is a fact then we can only *know* it for a fact inasmuch as it is revealed, and as far as it is revealed. And then in that case the revelation of the fact implies and involves the inspiration of the statement, the Divine authority of the word.

And this, doubtless, is so and must be so: God bases His love, so to say, upon our love; as we love Him so He loves us—a truth most distasteful to the natural heart, but nevertheless a truth. Upon what, then, is our love based, if His love is based on ours? Let us not shrink from the apparent paradox and vicious circle, for it is self-apparent that our love is based on His. “We love Him because He first loved us.” We know that He has first loved us because, and only because, He has told us so, and we believe His word. Before we believe His word we can have no love for Him, but having believed it, He loves us yet the more because we believe it, and in proportion as we continue in His love He continueth more and more in love towards us, for “He sheweth mercy unto thousands in them that love Him and keep His commandments.”

## IX.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.”—EXODUS xx. 7.

THE third commandment and the ninth are alike in this, that they both aim at the inculcation of truth. The third, however, deals with the obligation of man in relation to God, and the ninth in relation to his fellow-man in this matter: it is the former we have now to treat of. It may be doubted whether the direct bearing and intent of the third commandment is commonly understood by those who are most familiar with its language. To take God's name in vain is generally supposed to mean to use it lightly and irreverently; but however appropriately that offence may be regarded as implicitly forbidden by the terms of the third commandment, I apprehend it is certainly not its immediate or primary meaning. What the language of the third commandment really means is, Thou shalt not make use of the name of the Lord thy God in attestation of what is

false, thou shalt not call upon Him to witness to an untruth, thou shalt not, in fact, swear falsely.

This, I take it, is unquestionably what the words mean. That which is forbidden is the most extreme form of untruth; but then, of course, every lesser violation of the spirit of the precept is forbidden by implication, just as the sixth, seventh, and eighth commandments are universally understood as proscribing every act which does violence not only to their letter but their spirit. The third commandment, then, is to be especially noted as the very first that attempts to regulate the conduct of man after having prescribed the conditions of his worship of God. It is the first, therefore, that approaches the limits of what we understand as morality—for the laws of the first table may be generally regarded as dealing with religion, while those of the second inculcate morality, but the aim of the third is in the direction of morality. In fact, its object lies at the very foundation of morality, though it does not itself, strictly speaking, enter into the realm of morals, but is confined rather to that of religion. And this distinction is, as I shall endeavour to show, not a mere refinement; for the principle of the Ten Commandments is, like that of the Lord's Prayer, to direct attention first and foremost

to matters concerning God, and to postpone those which relate to man. And thus God says, Thou shalt not lift up my name to that which is vain, false, idle, for the Lord will not exculpate or hold guiltless him that doth so.

Now, what I want you to observe is, that we have here the Lord's jealousy exercised primarily, if we may so say, upon His *own* behalf: He is jealous for the honour of His own name, and will not have us dishonour it. This, of course, is no exception to what I remarked before—that the Lord is jealous for our sakes rather than His own—because it may very well be for our ultimate and highest advantage that we should so honour His name; but the form which the precept takes is the prohibition of that dishonour which our violation of it will do to Him. It is remarkable, therefore, that this commandment concerns itself with man's reverence for the name of God and with the assertion of the majesty of that name as a reality in itself and as the standard and source of truth. And we have to bear in mind that we are inquiring into the authority and origin of the moral law, we are endeavouring to find out not merely whether or what things are right, but *why* they are right and what the fact of their being right teaches us about ourselves and about them.

What, then, is the origin of this law? It must either be human or divine. If it is human it is derived from Moses,—the precept was merely an idea invented by him, having no higher authority or origin. But then surely, in this case, we should, so to say, be able to see to the end of it, to see through it and account for it; we should not be raised by it to an elevation above ourselves, to a position from which we should, as it were, be able to look down upon ourselves and condemn ourselves.

Let us suppose, for example, that something which we knew to be an unreality and a lie were to be put in the place of God, and were made to usurp the language of the third commandment: should we not instinctively feel that we were ourselves dishonoured, mocked, and befooled thereby? Why, then, is this, but simply because

“We needs must love the highest when we see it”?

We cannot but feel that it is in accordance with the moral constitution of our nature that we should owe allegiance and homage to truth, and that we can only despise ourselves when we find that we have been paying that allegiance and homage to a lie. To suppose, therefore, for a moment, if we can do so without blasphemy, that the Speaker of the third commandment

were Himself such an unreality, would not the language of it yet teach us that its principle was in accordance with truth, even though He (which God forgive us) were not true? But then we have this additional feature to account for. Not only is the law framed in exact harmony with our own moral constitution, but the Person speaking offers Himself as the direct opposite and antagonist of all that is false: Thou shalt not take my name for the attestation of any lie, in order to prove true any untruth, to show to be real any unreality. How, then, can we understand any precept like this on the supposition that the very name itself, and the knowledge of it, is such an unreality? That is, God declares Himself as responsible for the revelation of His name: if there be no revelation of the name there can be no essential antagonism between the person forbidding and the thing forbidden. It is the unreal that forbids the unreal; in other words, as our Lord says, Satan, the liar and the father of lies, is divided against himself.

Now, forasmuch as this is the earliest and the most solemn, if not the solitary inculcation of reverence to the name of God as the God of truth, and we know that the law inculcated is the very rule and standard of our own moral



constitution, is not that in itself a very strong presumption that the law is a Divine law, and not a human invention? There is that in our nature, in the very foundation of our moral consciousness, which tells us that the prohibition of the third commandment must be the will and intention of Him who is the eternal truth, even if we suppose for a moment that it were uttered falsely in His name. But as this is how the knowledge of it comes to us, and how alone it comes to us, what further proof do we want to show that the Person to whose righteous law our conscience thus bears witness is Himself the Person whose law it is? Nothing shall persuade us that this is not the law: what further evidence do we need to show that the Person through whom we have learnt the law is verily He to whom the law refers?—for if otherwise, then He through whom we have learnt the law is only making us conscious of its solemn obligations in order to bring us in guilty of violating them through ignorance of Him to whom of right they refer.

Thus, again, we are brought back to the foundation principle that the proof of revelation is in the thing revealed. In God's light we see light; it is He, and He only, who gives us light, and when He enables us to see the light He

enables us to see the evidence of Himself, and we are guilty of violence to our own nature as well as of treason to Him when we use the possession of the light as an excuse for not seeing Him whose light it is, and who is Himself the Light.

The very utterance of the law, then, is itself a revelation : Thou shalt not take my name, the name of the Lord thy God, in vain. It is unlawful because, and only because, I am the Lord thy God. I am the invisible law, the ultimate standard and principle which thou canst not but acknowledge and feel in thy moral nature. Thou art conscious of a right, and of a wrong which deflects from that right ; it is impossible to confound the two without doing violence to thyself. Why is this but because this is how thou art made, this is how I have made thee ? I have revealed the law, for thine own conscience is a witness thereto ; and I have revealed myself in revealing the law, for otherwise the revelation of the law without the revelation of the person to whom it referred would leave thee in darkness thicker and greater than before. But I have revealed the Person also, for the Person speaking is I. I have called thee by thy name : thou art mine.

It is thus that the law reveals the Person by its directly personal appeal : Thou shalt not take

my name in vain, nor associate it with any falsehood. As thou shalt not fashion thee any image to represent me, so thou shalt not mix up any falsehood with thy utterance of my name: I am the Lord thy God.

It is to be observed, however, that the law, though it is thus personal in its demands, is universal in its operation. Even those whom it does not directly address are not beyond the sphere of its exercise, for the Lord will not hold guiltless or clear from guilt any that take His name in vain. The name once given is the possession of mankind, but every man is responsible for his use of it. It instinctively sends a shudder through one to hear the foul oath or the impious blasphemy as it falls from ungodly lips in our streets, for it tells of a hardened heart and a benighted understanding; but it is not these only who are offenders against the third commandment, for assuredly this commandment has a solemn message for all those who address their brethren in the name of God. If its meaning is, Thou shalt not make use of my name to establish or confirm any lie, to strengthen the appeal to what is false, then verily is it fraught with a solemn warning for those who teach in the name of God, lest while they profess to utter the words of God they

utter also their own. Every one, therefore, who mixes up self with the holy things of God is violating the spirit of this commandment. It is thus that we see how the obligation to truth which it inculcated was reflected back upon the lawgiver. He was himself the first, the most flagrant and egregious culprit, if in the promulgation of a law like this he was uttering his own words and not God's, or seeking his own glory rather than the glory of Him that sent him. It is thus that not only the revelation of the law is its own witness, but also the very form of its promulgation is the warrant for its truth ; for "God spake all these words saying, I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other gods but me . . . Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

One may well be thankful that in the present day the Christian minister is relieved from the necessity of inveighing against those habits of swearing and profanity which were at one time too common among us. Like the habits of intemperance that prevailed in former years in the upper ranks of life, those habits have also greatly disappeared. It is no longer a mark of gentle blood, any more than it is of gentle manners, to swear or to be drunk. There is doubtless much that calls for reformation ; but

these things, at all events, have been repressed. Still we must bear in mind that if the reformation is a matter only of taste and not of principle, it is possible for taste to change, as it has changed. We cannot rely upon the change of taste unless it be based upon a change of principle; and it is the recognition of *principle* for which I contend. It is principles that are at stake in the present day. A large proportion of those who think for us are adrift in the matter of principle: they have given up the old, and have not yet discovered the new; and it is not too much to say that they never will except by returning to the old. We do not want to assume the manners any more than to wear the habiliments of the past, but we do want to recognise eternal principle, and principle is a matter of the present and the future rather than of the past, for principle is that which liveth, and He that liveth and is the only source of life is the Lord. And the Lord declares that He is our Maker and our Judge. To Him it belongeth to pronounce guilty or to hold guiltless—a terrific prerogative and a tremendous alternative. Guilt and guiltlessness belong alike to Him. Before His eyes we are, one and all, personally guilty—or guiltless; but, in either case, it is a holding guilty or declaring guiltless. As a

matter of fact, we have one and all sinned and come short of the glory of God ; we have all mixed up truth and falsehood, we have all turned away from the real and followed after shams and vanity, and we are verily guilty under this head ; but it is the Lord's to hold guiltless, to take away transgression, to abolish that which cannot absolutely be undone, and to clear from guilt. Even so it is said, " Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." And we know that this non-imputation of sin, this imputation of sinlessness, is the gift bestowed upon those who come unto God by faith. As all darkness vanishes when it comes into contact with the light, so is sin and guilt dissipated when it is brought by faith into the personal presence of God through the blood-shedding of Jesus Christ. When we so call upon the Father through Him whom He hath sealed and chosen, He will hold us guiltless of the great transgression because we take hold of His name as it is revealed to us in Christ Jesus, and acknowledge that He is the one only source of sinlessness and pardon who spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets and lawgivers of old, but hath in these last times spoken unto us by His Son, the sinless One, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

## X.

“Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work : But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God : in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates : For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day : wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

EXODUS xx. 8.

THE fourth commandment is the last of those which concern religion as distinct from morality, or the duty of man in his relation to God rather than his fellow-man.

The institution of the sabbath is characteristic of, if it is not peculiar to, the Mosaic Law, though there is evidence from the Mosaic writings that its observance was of far earlier date than the giving of the Law. The use of the word “remember” may possibly but does not necessarily point to this. But, at all events, one thing is quite clear—that when this commandment was given the first chapter of

Genesis was not only in existence, but familiar to the people; for the fourth commandment is based upon the first chapter of Genesis, and cannot itself have supplied the material for the composition of that document.

And the special feature of this commandment in regard to religion is the fact that it provides for the religious disposal of man's time. A certain proportion of man's life was to be set apart as holy to God. He was so to regard one-seventh of all his days. His whole life was to be measured by the recurrence of the weekly portion which was dedicated to God. But this was not put forth as an arbitrary command: on the contrary, it was declared to be right because it was a following out of the principle which had governed the divine action in the beginning of the world. Man was to keep holy a certain portion of his time, because God in the beginning had kept a like portion holy. God had blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because then He rested from his work; and man's observance of the seventh day was in like manner to take the form of rest. God's rest, however, is not to be misunderstood. The work of production and of reproduction, of calling into existence and of creating, which is exclusively God's work, goes on still, and has



gone on from the first ; as our Lord says, " My Father worketh hitherto and I work."\* The rest, therefore, of God, which seems to embrace all His personal action, must be something very different from the creative work which is recorded in Genesis. It is impossible for us to understand what this work was ; but we are led to infer that the present creative work of God, which we witness with our own eyes, compared with that is as rest compared with work.

Looked at, then, in its original bearing, what evidence does this commandment give of its own origin and authority ? Surely the very highest ; for it shows a desire on the part of God that man should enter into His rest, it shows God making provision not only for His worship by man, as we saw in the second commandment, but also in such a manner as to secure the worship itself. Not only is the manner but the fact of worship provided for ; not only its method, but its measure. Supposing this to be an actual fact, we could surely have no higher evidence of God's personal interest in and regard for man. If we accept the revelation giving it, we know it for an actual fact, and therefore *have* the most conclusive proof of the love of God. The Sabbath is a

\* John v. 17.

perpetual sign of this love—a perpetual witness between God and man.

But beyond this the institution is based upon what is recorded as a fact in the past relations between God and His universe of which it is absolutely impossible for us to know anything except by direct revelation. Neither scientific investigation nor reflection, nor the use of any agencies we can bring to bear, could possibly have discovered that there were seven stages or gradations in God's creation of the world—that He wrought for six days and rested on the seventh; and therefore, if this is a fact, which I maintain, it is simply impossible for science either to prove or to disprove—it is a fact which we can only know, so far as we know it, on the authority of revelation. In order, therefore, that the fourth commandment may have any authority at all, we must allow the conception of revelation; but allowing that, it surely comes to us in a form that justifies revelation, for it is based upon a fact that revelation alone could tell us. But if it is a revelation that we have to deal with here—as it must be, if what is told us is a truth—then the precept which is based upon it needs no higher authority, for its origin, like our knowledge of the fact, is Divine.

There is one other preliminary observation to be made. We must, I conceive, be careful not to assign any limit to the *days* here spoken of, unless we wish to bring the whole matter into contempt. The creative days were not days in the life of man, but days in the life of God. If the period of God's rest on the seventh day is now going on, and includes the whole of human history—as the narrative referred to seems to suggest—this must be so; but it seems to me to be conclusively shown by that narrative itself. What is the physical cause of the alternation of day and night but the motion of the earth in relation to the sun? But the narrative tells us of those of the seven days which had their mornings and evenings before God made the two great lights of the fourth day. It is therefore, as it seems to me, simply impossible that we can be intended to understand by these *three* days periods of twenty-four hours; but if not by those, why by the others? Moreover, we are especially told that God placed these lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night and to be for signs and seasons, and for *days* and years. What then about the days which intervened before they were so placed? Whatever difficulties may beset this marvellous

narrative, let us be careful not to add to them by making the narrative according to our interpretation of it contradict itself.

I observed before that this commandment is one of those which belong to the first table, or the precepts affecting man's relation to God. It is, moreover, the only commandment of the ten which has any of the marks of being of a temporary or transient character. So far as it fixed the *seventh* day as the day set apart for the worship of God, it is perfectly clear that it has been abrogated. The Sabbath is no longer the Lord's day. Of this abrogation there is not a trace in Scripture of a legislative character. As a matter of fact, the universal Christian Church has adopted another day. It has *post-poned* the Jewish Sabbath to the first day. But no less is it a matter of fact that this momentous change was brought about silently and without observation in history. The Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of St. Paul, the Revelation of St. John, alike bear witness to the change having been brought about; but as to how it was brought about they are altogether silent. Of any Divine command respecting it, there is, as I say, no trace. We have abundant evidence of the fact, but of the commandment ruling the fact, not a vestige. And yet

it is impossible to account for the fact as a fact, except only upon one supposition. A sufficient cause had come into operation to account for the change which had taken place as early as the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The cause must have been adequate, and it must have been relative. The day observed was the first day; the first day had become vested with profound significance, for it was very early the first day of the week that Christ rose from the dead. We know also that during the forty days that followed His resurrection—those days which we now commemorate—He specially noted by His own conduct the recurrence of the first day. The inference, therefore, is natural, is unavoidable—but I would ask you to observe that it is only an inference—that He left behind Him some verbal and unrecorded precept which virtually abrogated that part of the fourth commandment which related to the seventh day as literally the seventh in order of the seven days of the week. But then surely this is a very significant fact. The whole Christian Church agrees in taking no notice of the seventh day, but observes the first instead. That is to say, the very form of the fourth commandment is set aside tacitly, but absolutely without any express permission from the original Giver

of it. St. Paul does indeed say, in his letter to Colosse, "Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days,"—that is to say, you are not to be condemned if you observe not the Sabbath days ; for that this is his meaning is clear from the context—"which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." We know that the churches of Corinth came together on the first day ; we know that St. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day ; we know that the disciples at Troas came together to break bread on the first day ; but we have no Scripture record of *Christian* observance of the seventh day, for that Paul should preach to the *Jews* in the synagogue at Antioch and Thessalonica on the Sabbath days, was not only natural but necessary, if he would bring them to Christ ; but the evidence we have of *Christian* worship as such from the very first is on the first day—which being confirmed, as it is, by the practice of our Lord Himself, may surely be taken, as in fact it has been taken, for proof that the injunctions of the fourth commandment in this respect have been abrogated. Resurrection is a far higher act than God's resting from the work of creation, and far more worthy of the Christian's commemoration, and therefore the

first day is far more worthy of honour than the seventh, and therefore we keep the first and not the seventh. But this being so, we are not obscurely taught that as the first day has reference to the resurrection of Christ, so the seventh day has reference to His rest in the tomb, and the sixth to His death on the cross ; and that, in fact, in some way which as yet we cannot fully comprehend, the creative work of God may have been, and probably was, significant of the redemptive work of Christ, and was intended to point us ultimately to that. But if so, the injunctions of the fourth commandment, in their rigid exclusion of work and their strict inculcation of rest, had mystic reference to the rest of Christ in death, and to that period in the history of the world when He, having finished the work God gave him to do, rested absolutely from all His works in the darkness, silence, and extinction of the grave, as God did from His, and so fulfilled the meaning of the rest of God on the seventh day. If this was so, the very act of Christ Himself, in so taking rest, would have abrogated, we may well believe, the restrictions of the fourth commandment, as His rising from the dead on the first day abrogated its specific appointment of the seventh day as the day of rest.

Again, the fourth commandment from its very nature was one which was liable to abuse in the direction of its observance. It is the first commandment which is positive and not negative in its form; it does not forbid—it enjoins, or at all events it enjoins before it forbids: it first commands the seventh day to be kept holy, and then forbids any work upon it. We can see, therefore, that it was specially open to violation in the opposite directions of diminution and excess. The Old Testament gives us examples of the former during the period of the wanderings in the age of the prophets, and in the time of Nehemiah. The New Testament gives us examples of the latter. In the time of our Lord the Jewish observance of the Sabbath had become a matter of gross and extravagant superstition, so that this superstitious reverence of it called forth indignant reprobation from the Son of God, and the utterance of the Divine principle which at once abrogated the exclusive restrictions of the fourth commandment and revealed its true, inherent, and abiding principle, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,” when He coupled therewith the majestic inference, “Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” Now, if any one of less authority than Christ had ventured



to enunciate such a principle, we should justly have stood aghast at his audacity, as the Jews did ; but when we duly realise the solemn and momentous fact that here was one far greater than Moses, who was only the mediator of the old Law—even the Lawgiver Himself, “God made manifest in the flesh ”—we need no more to show us that in the principle so enunciated we have a revelation of at least equal authority with the fourth commandment, and one which, cutting across as it did the line of its over-observance, must even now tend to modify and may claim to interpret it. But then what a sublime comment it is, and how it reveals more than ever the heart of the Lawgiver !

I said that God desires man to enter into His rest. The world is a restless world, and to us whose lot is cast in these latter days it is more than ever restless ; but the life of God is a life of rest. Of Him alone can we say that His work is at once unresting and His rest unbroken ; but most true is it that if man would enjoy rest he can find it only in the heart of God and in Christ who has revealed that heart. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Oh, blessed words, which fall upon the ear like angels’ strains, and are full of sweetness and full of rest. Man can-

not rest till he has heard these words and complied with their hallowed invitation, for it is rest which is holy: "God rested the seventh day and hallowed it," and if man is to hallow the seventh day he must rest. Very striking is this intimate connection which the fourth commandment reveals between rest and holiness. Is not that an indication, and do we need any other, that it is Divine,—for rest is of God and God is holy? Surely man could not have discovered for himself, most assuredly he has not learnt it yet, that rest is holiness and that holiness is rest; and yet he was told that in order to hallow the Sabbath day he must rest, and that when God rested on that day He made it holy.

And this is the lesson which for the present I would leave with you: if we would rest, we must rest in holiness, in God's holiness, for in God's holiness and in that alone we shall find rest. We are tossed to and fro on the weary, desolate ocean of life. We are assailed by angry winds, by raging storms and drifting currents; we are now tempest-tossed and now becalmed, we are now in felt peril of our lives, and now in jeopardy without knowing it; neither sun nor stars have for many days appeared, and no small tempest lies upon us; but He who rested in sleep through the storm on the lake of Galilee is

with us still, and He says to us, as He said to His own of old, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" He ruleth the raging of the sea, and the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people. He calleth to us to be of good cheer, and he that heareth His voice and believeth on Him shall enter into rest.

## XI.

“Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work : but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God : in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates ; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm : therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.”—DEUT. v. 12-15.

THE second promulgation of the fourth commandment, which is preserved to us here, differs in some important particulars from the first, which is given in Exodus. Here, for example, we have the specific mention of the ox and the ass, in addition to the rest of the cattle, as though flocks and herds were now about to constitute more prominently the wealth of Israel in the assured possession of Canaan. But more remarkably, the reference to the six days' creation is omitted, and the merciful object of

the command revealed in the words "that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou," while the remembrance of the bondage in Egypt is directly associated with the rest of the Sabbath day. It is important to notice these variations, because those who have an interest in depreciating the value of Scripture have drawn attention to them, and used them as the means of throwing discredit on the Divine authority of either and both forms, but much more because we ought carefully to observe the different circumstances under which each professes to have been spoken, and the exact manner in which the variation in the form corresponds with the variation in the circumstances. The command as given in Deuteronomy professes to be the republication of the former one some forty years afterwards. It is expressly said, therefore, "Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the *Lord thy God hath commanded thee.*" When and where was this, we may ask, if not at Horeb, and in the 20th chapter of Exodus, at the first giving of the Law? It is assumed that the people were familiar with the Law, as of course they were. The day also is called, you will observe, the Sabbath day; and as Sabbath means rest, it is far more easy to understand the application of that name to the

seventh day for the reason assigned in Exodus than it is to understand the mere arbitrary appointment of the seventh day as a day of rest without any reason assigned, coupled as it is here with the provision "that thy servant may rest as well as thou." And then once more, when the Law was first given, just after the Exodus, there was little probability of Israel's forgetting the bondage in Egypt; but now that they were about to enter the long promised land and become possessors of it, there could be nothing more needful than that they should constantly cherish the remembrance of that great redemption. For all these reasons, therefore, we can see that the alteration of the form of this commandment in Deuteronomy was specially appropriate to the new occasion under which it was made.

But again, there are two other features connected with it which require to be mentioned. As a different event is here associated with the rest of the Sabbath day, the institution itself is thereby vested with a degree of elasticity which we should hardly have expected. Though the rest of the seventh day was based on the rest of God, that was not the only reason for observing it. There was not merely a creative work to be commemorated, but also a redemp-

tive work; and it was this redemptive work which was to be the characteristic mark of the new dispensation which was prefigured by the second giving of the Law. Hence we are prepared to a certain extent for the temporary and transient character of the original precept by the difference of the motive assigned for keeping it. But more than all, there is brought into strong prominence, on the second promulgation of it, the benevolent purpose of the original command. The Sabbath was a merciful provision designed for the benefit of all alike—"that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou." It was not designed for the selfish advantage and enjoyment of one, but for the general benefit of all. The reminder thus given in Deuteronomy was at once worthy of the milder character of the second enunciation of the Law, and also preparatory for the coming of that dispensation in which the Lawgiver should Himself declare that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

Thus far we have been endeavouring to arrive at the principles which underlie the institution of the Sabbath; and in order fully to understand them, it was needful to look at the precept, not only as it was first given, but as it was subsequently modified. The more difficult task is

now before us of determining what is our present relation to this precept? We cannot decide this without carefully apprehending the nature of these principles.

It can hardly be doubted, when we duly bear in mind all the facts, that there was something in the fourth commandment of a merely temporary character. It was not intended from the first that the rest of the seventh day should be permanently and universally observed with all the rigidity of the Sabbath. I at least for one cannot believe *this* when I consider attentively all the facts. The Sabbath days, as St. Paul says, were among those institutions which are a shadow of things to come while the body is of Christ. In other words, the Sabbath is a means to an end—it is not an end in itself. As constantly happens with persons of a Judaic tone of mind, the Jews made it an end in itself. Their observance of it, therefore, was idolatrous and superstitious. The means hid the end from their view as the visible image hides the invisible. This is one of the principles to which I refer—the transitory character of the Jewish Sabbath as an institution.

The second is the spiritual purpose and intention of the precept. The end aimed at was mercy. The design was benevolent and



beneficent. God invites man to enter into His rest; He desires that all may rest. The Sabbath was made for man. Its character was human, and its design humane. We shall not estimate it aright if we fail thoroughly to grasp these two principles.

But then, I think there are others also to be borne in mind. The Sabbath day by its very name is, after all, the day of rest; and the Sabbath, whether the first day or the seventh, is after all one day in seven. Now, these are the two principles in the opposite direction which we have to observe and ponder. And as with the Jews of old the two former principles were those that were in danger of being forgotten, so with us Christians now it is these latter ones which require to be thoroughly understood and appreciated. Let us then try to understand and appreciate them.

Is there any special holiness attached to one day in seven? That is the question which is asked nowadays, and not seldom answered in the negative; and the tendency of mind thus evidenced is exemplified in various ways. For instance, in like manner it is said that we can do without the belief in miracles now, because we have learnt to see the supernatural in common things, and so forth. But

if it is the supernatural that we see in common things, then where is the natural? And if all is natural, where is the supernatural? Is there no distinction between the two? And if there is any, what is it? And so if a general holiness has been suffused over everything, and everything has been made holy, is there nothing that is unholy? Surely that is a principle which would very soon lead us into deadly error. If there is no such thing as sin, then most assuredly there is no such thing as holiness, and if there is no such thing as holiness, there is no such thing as sin, or rather everything is alike sinful; and so if every day is equally and alike holy, then not only is there no day unholy, which may well be the case, but also there is no day holy. But we are told that God rested the seventh day and *hallowed* it. That is, He made the seventh day to be what He had not made any other day to be. He put a distinction of character, and not merely a numerical distinction, between the days of the *week*; and He did this by the institution of the week—an institution which was not abrogated when He hallowed the first day of the week by rising from the dead upon it more than He did the seventh day by resting upon it from His creative work. Christ did

indeed hallow all the days of the week by living and working and doing His deeds of mercy, as far as we know, upon all alike; but He did not rise from the dead upon all: that was the highest and most blessed act by which He signalled the first day and marked it out from all the rest. Because, then, He has truly hallowed every day, that is no reason why we should not keep holy the first day, on which He rose and thereby made it the Lord's day,—any more than because He has redeemed and consecrated every action of our human life and made it divine, that is any reason why every action of that life should be regarded as equally holy, or the acts of prayer and Communion should be esteemed as nothing more than the ordinary intercourse with our fellow-men or than the breaking of our daily bread. As a matter of fact, the principle of disregarding the holiness of the Lord's day on the ground that every day is holy falls to pieces utterly when confronted with the facts and constitution of our human life, which God has made to consist of alternations of day and night, of darkness and light, of toil and rest. I take it, then, the principle remains inviolate and inviolable that God has put a difference between the days of our life,

if only by teaching His beloved disciple to call the first the Lord's day. And I cannot but think that the conscience of every enlightened Christian would recognise as a disastrous calamity the successful effort to obliterate all distinction between the common days of the week and that which, following his example, we call the Lord's day. Depend upon it, in accordance with our nature and constitution it is not the surest way of hallowing all the days of our life to hallow none. And when St. Paul said "One man esteemeth one day above another, and another man esteemeth every day alike: let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind," he did not contemplate such a persuasion as would recognise no difference for the people of God between days common and days holy, or an entire abolition of the Christian Sabbath.

And this brings us to the second principle. The distinguishing characteristic of the Lord's day is that of rest. We cannot be always working, any more than we can be always awake: we must sleep, and we must rest. There is a time to sleep and a time to rest, as there is also a time to work; and God has ordained for the most merciful of all reasons that it is rest which shall characterise His own holy day.

We cannot contemplate with any satisfaction the idea of continuous and unceasing work for human society. As a matter of fact, if man will not rest on the Lord's day, he must and will rest on his own, for he cannot do without rest. What a blessing it is, then, that this rest, which is so needful for him, has been associated by his Maker with the work of creation and of re-creation, of God's own perpetual rest and of His Son's resurrection from the grave; and what a loss it must be to man when he fails thus to enter into God's idea of rest! The Prime Minister said the other day—and I for one was thankful he said it—"Of all Divine institutions, there is none more Divine than that which secures to man a day of rest."\* But Divine as the day is in its institution, that which can alone make it Divine to man is that man should associate with it the acts whereby God has consecrated it—that is to say, by entering through faith into God's rest, "for we which have believed do enter into rest," and by rising from the death of sin and self as Christ rose. As long as we fail to do this, we fail to realise fully the Divine idea of the day of rest. The day of rest was not given that man might be idle and please himself; it was not given that

\* Speech in the House of Lords, Monday, May 5, 1879.

man might keep it as a saturnalian holiday, pursuing the devices and desires of his own heart with a greater zest than on any other day, preoccupied as all other days necessarily are with enforced obedience to the no less Divine precept "Six days shalt thou work and do all that thou hast to do,"—but it was given that man might recreate his soul after the image of Him that created him, and rested from creating him on the seventh day, and yet more by the resurrection grace of Him who conquered death and abolished sin by rising from the tomb the first day.

It is the less needful for me to dwell in detail upon the practical application of these principles to some of the disputed problems of the present day, because in proportion as these principles are really grasped will those problems, I believe, be solved. I suppose no Christian man, for example, would advocate habitual Sunday travelling; but at the same time we must remember that the exigencies of modern society had no counterpart in the life of Israel in the desert, and a thousand calls of duty may arise which necessitate a journey on the Sunday, and if so, "let no man judge you in respect of the Sabbath days." I for one should be very sorry to see the English Sunday more nearly assimilated to the Sunday

in Paris; nor do I believe that good would result from the opening to the public of picture galleries and museums on the Sunday. I do not see that it could educate the people for God, even if—which I greatly doubt—it could, strictly speaking, *educate* them in any other way. But we must not forget that this, after all, is not the question; but whether or not God has put a difference between the days of our life by hallowing His own day, and whether, if that be so, this is one of the best ways of helping them to hallow it, which I apprehend the advocates of such a course would by no means be disposed to maintain. And this brings us after all to the root question—Is the institution of the Sabbath, in whatever form and under whatever name it is known, whether as the Sunday or the seventh day or the day of rest or the Lord's day,—is the observance of this day an ordinance of man or of God? If of man, then unquestionably in our times there is a very strong tendency at work in all directions towards setting it aside; and I do not, I confess, see why, if man made it, he should not set it aside. Man has got tired of the restraints of a law which he framed in his own parliament: why not repeal it? If he had the power to make it, he undeniably has the power to repeal it. But if this

is not the case, if this law was not made by man, then who made it? If man can give no account in the nature of things why he should have made it, or having made it, should kick against it and wish it were done away with, then the only natural inference is that somehow or other God made it, that He made it as a perpetual sign between Himself and man, that in spite of himself man, as he listens to the words of this law, more or less knows and feels that it is from God, and that the key to its true obedience lies in the living and eternal spirit of the Lord's words that the Sabbath was made *by God* for man, and not man for the Sabbath.



XII.

“Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”—EXODUS xx. 12.

WE now pass from our consideration of those precepts of the Decalogue which are the basis of *religious* obligation to those which are the foundation and standard of morality—from the laws affecting our relation to God to those which concern our relation to man. The first of these is that which inculcates honour to parents. We find, then, in this commandment what may be called the plan or outline of all human society. If this precept is of God, it lays down as a part of the Divine scheme the foundation principle that one part of human society is subordinate to another. In these days when strong revulsion of thought leads us to call in question opinions and beliefs of ancient authority, men are by no means universally persuaded that *this* principle of subordination in society is Divine; but I proceed on the supposition that the Decalogue is verily and indeed of God, and endeavour to

ascertain why and how it is so. It is certain, however, that one of the blatant cries of our time has been "liberty, *equality*, fraternity." The question, therefore, is whether the root principle of this cry or whether that of the fifth commandment is the true one, and whether the one which is true can establish its claim to superiority and can show itself Divine.

For this is my first point—that the principle which is represented by the cry of equality is essentially inconsistent with and fundamentally opposed to the principle of the fifth commandment. The fifth commandment asserts, as plainly as it is possible to do so, the principle that in human society there are those by whom honour must be given and those to whom it is due. It affirms that the younger are bound to honour the elder—that parents are entitled to the honour of their children. Now, if this is the case, and in whatever degree it is the case, there is a fatal blow struck at the notion of abstract equality. Two men cannot be equal if one is under the obligation to pay honour to the other which that other has a right to receive. We are, of course, not speaking now of the case in which two men are mutually bound to honour each other, as constantly happens, but of the case like that contemplated

by the fifth commandment, in which honour is due from the second to the first which is not reciprocally due from the first to the second; and we maintain that whenever this occurs—as it does occur, for example, between a father and his son—there is an end to all notion of abstract equality. The son is not equal to the father because, and simply because, the father is entitled to be honoured by the son, *as* the son—for that is the point—is not entitled to be honoured by the father because of his subordinate position as a son.

Now, there is no question that this is the teaching of the fifth commandment: the only question that can be raised is, How far is this teaching Divine? It would seem that the only way in which we can show it to be Divine is by showing it first to be necessarily and essentially human. If this is virtually the principle on which, as a matter of fact, human society is constructed, then we may assume that it is not a matter of mere arbitrary arrangement on the part of man, but that it represents the conditions of his existence, the law of his being, so that to go counter to this principle would be no less contrary to the true nature of man than to do violence to the normal action of a complex piece of machinery.

But surely nature itself teaches us that there is a difference of gradation between parents and children, and that parents have rights over their children which the children have not over their parents. It is absurd and preposterous to suppose that the child of ten is not subordinate to the father of forty, just as it is to imagine that he can be independent of him. To insist upon the rights of the father is not to disclaim or ignore those of the child, for if the child is dependent on the father the father must be responsible for his care of the child ; but it remains an obvious fact that in virtue of this dependence the child is also subordinate to his father to that extent which the law demands under the name of honour.

Nature, then, has given the father certain rights over the child ; but as far as this is so the father did not make those rights, but found them ready made. If, however, those rights are common to fatherhood as fatherhood—are the universal prerogative of paternity—then that shows that they are part of the principle upon which humanity is constituted. Humanity, therefore, must either have constructed itself on this principle, or it must have been constructed ; but it could not so construct itself, any more than the child could construct for itself the

relation in which it stands to its father. We are therefore led to the conclusion of the Psalmist : " It is he that hath made us and not we ourselves." The voice of nature in this respect is assuredly the voice of God, and the law of the fifth commandment is the law of God because it is the rescript of the law of nature.

But then it is to be observed that the principle of the paternal relationship and the obligations arising from it are but the patterns of similar relationships characterising human society. If the filial obligation is recognised the principle of abstract inequality is recognised. There are those who are subordinate to others, for all sons are or ought to be subordinate to their fathers and all children to their parents ; but as all men are or have been children, all men are or have been subordinate to others, even if now they have attained to a position in which others are subordinate to them. This shows us that the main general feature of this relationship is expressed by seniority. The relation of subordination varies inversely with seniority : it gradually passes away as seniority comes on ; but the principle remains and is established that equality is destroyed by seniority. The young, as a matter of fact, are not equal to the old.

We see, then, that the relation of inequality

is not dependent merely upon that of father and son ; it may rightly and justly exist where that relation does not exist. Among the various ramifications, however, of human society, it is plain that various accidental circumstances will invest a man with conditions analogous to those of paternity and seniority. Birth, wealth, education, intellect, station, and the like, will as a matter of fact give a man advantages which it is simply impossible to ignore without disregard to truth, and which cannot be set aside without doing violence to the virtual and the actual constitution of society. The man that lacks these advantages is not equal, by the constitution of God no less than by the accident of society, to the man that has them, any more than the dwarf is equal to the giant. It does not follow but that the dwarf may have other advantages tending to compensate him for his physical disadvantage, just as the accidental advantages of station and the like may be more than counterbalanced by other defects ; but it is absurd, revolutionary, and untrue, not to acknowledge the fact that subordination is a primary and fundamental principle of human society, and that this principle has its origin in the law of God as propounded in the fifth commandment, and receives

its sanction from it. The corruptions and abuses of society may have brought about certain conditions artificial and unreal in which the principle of subordination may operate prejudicially to the interests of society at large, or of certain portions of society; but there can be no question that society at large is constructed, and divinely constructed, on the principle of subordination, and not upon that of an abstract and uniform equality,—and the ultimate reason and proof of it is that it is God who makes one man to differ from another, as it was God who said at Sinai, “Honour thy father and thy mother.”

The fifth commandment has been called by the apostle Paul “the first commandment with promise.” This promise as given in Deuteronomy slightly varies in form from that given here; for there the commandment runs, “Honour thy father and thy mother as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee”—that is to say, both in Exodus xx. 5 and in thine own conscience—“that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” It is frequently asserted that this temporal promise is now abrogated, and that we can no longer hope for a literal fulfilment of it. But I venture to

doubt very much whether it was ever intended to be understood *literally*, even when first given, and whether as a matter of fact it was then more frequently fulfilled literally than it is now. I am by no means sure that we have sufficient evidence to show that God's providential dealings with His people then differed in the main from His dealings with us now. I apprehend that the *righteous* were taken away from the evil to come then, and not seldom in early youth, as they are now. I apprehend that inscrutable and untimely accidents were wont at times to snatch away some of the most hopeful, even as at times they do now; but for all that I fully believe that the general blessing of this commandment is as true now as it was then. I believe fully that the blessing of God, not seldom revealed in visible prosperity and in length of days, still accompanies those who in the spirit of it are obedient to this commandment, just as it did of old.

I see no evidence to show that we are living under a different dispensation now because the principles of that dispensation are better understood and are known to be of far wider application than was then supposed. I am certain that obedience to the laws of God will in the long run secure the greatest amount of tem-



poral prosperity, just as obedience to the laws of nature will secure in the main the greatest average length of life and the largest enjoyment of good health, even though in all cases alike individual instances may occur which appear to militate against the general rule. And certain I am that habitual violation of the principle of the fifth commandment, and the attempt to substitute the theory of equality for the fact of subordination, will quickly bring down upon society the curse of God in the form of disorganisation and disorder, revolution and anarchy; and that those who set at nought the merciful provisions of the fifth commandment for the constitution of human society shall not find it go well with them in this country or in any other, and that they shall not prolong their days in any land that the Lord shall give them. For all human experience bears testimony to the consequences that attend the violation of this precept, even if our short-sighted and partial observation is not able to discover universally the fulfilment of the promise attached to it.

I have said that the fifth commandment is the foundation of the moral law, inasmuch as it is the first of those precepts which prescribe the action of man towards his fellow-man. This

it does by the introduction of the principle of order into human society. Human society is not a fortuitous aggregate congeries of individual atoms, in which one has no relation to the other and each strives to be independent of the rest; but the main principle of its constitution is prescribed by God, and is typically and symbolically represented by the paternal and filial relation.

In like manner the ideal king is the father of his people, and the chief pastor of the church an ideal "father in God,"—even as St. Paul addressed his converts, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." The fatherly relationship is the essential principle of human society. That it is the universal condition of the continuation of society is patent and obvious. We have all had our natural parents; but though this relationship is a sufficient explanation of the existing *facts* of society it is not a sufficient explanation of the *origin* of society, for all analogy teaches us that there must have been a first man, who, being himself a father, had no one like himself whom he could call a father. We must therefore either conceive an unending series of fathers and sons having literally no beginning and no end—which we cannot con-

ceive,—or we must suppose an original first man derived according to modern theories from some other being, on the hypothesis, as yet not a man, but in whose case this reverential order, which is the known basis of existing society, did not obtain; for under such circumstances the first man could not honour *his* father, who was nothing more than a rudimentary man or an abnormal ape;—or we must allow that the conception of the first man leads us straight back to God as the Creator and Originator of this first man, even as St. Luke in his genealogy of our Lord says that He was reckoned as the son of Joseph, “which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.”

Thus the Scripture theory of the constitution of human society leads us up to the Divine origin of man. Society is built upon paternity, which involves order, which involves reverence, because man himself in his original constitution is the son of God. If the due relation between son and father is to obtain, it can only be because it finds its ultimate limit in God. God is the Father of man, man is the son of God. It is because man by his origin stands in this relation to God that he is constituted to stand in this relation to himself. The fatherly authority of man over man is ultimately derived

from the fatherly authority of God over man ; and thus the violation of the former is ultimately and indirectly a violation and denial of the latter. The disregard of fatherly authority and the defect of the filial spirit is an insult to the constitution of man, which has its root in the being of God.

In this way it is that the fifth commandment bears silent witness to its own Divine origin. We cannot satisfactorily and sufficiently account for a principle which is manifestly and experimentally the principle on which human society is constituted, unless that principle finds its full and ultimate realisation and justification in man's relation to God. If God is verily the Father of man, then the allegiance man owes to God is the archetype and pattern of that allegiance which the son owes his father or the child his parent ; but if otherwise, then the fatherly relation is not after an essential principle, and in accordance with the nature of things but a mere arbitrary arrangement which is as uncertain in its duration as it is obscure and ambiguous in its origin. Its obligations may last as long as, but no longer than, man chooses to acknowledge them, and then come to nought. Whereas the experience of mankind for generations and ages has shown, and will

continue to show till time shall be no more, that the old precept was indeed given by God, and is verily still of God, "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

## XIII.

“Thou shalt not kill.”—EXODUS xx. 13.

IN seeking to ascertain what is the origin and authority of the moral law we shall probably find efficient and trustworthy guidance in a close examination of the sixth commandment. For what is it that commandment enjoins, and what does it enunciate? It enunciates the sacredness of human life, and enjoins a mutual respect for it, binding alike upon ourselves and others. We have, then, to ask, Is that injunction reasonable? and if so, why is it reasonable, and what does its being reasonable imply? First, then, is the commandment reasonable? The preservation of human life and the value attaching to it manifestly advances with the advance of civilisation. As man progresses in the experience of life, he attaches more importance to it; as he develops in knowledge and ingenuity and refinement, he estimates the value of human life more and more highly. Clearly, therefore, if

the growth of knowledge, ingenuity and refinement is any index of the growth of reason, and is in accordance with reason, a precept which tends to the preservation of human life and keeps watch over it cannot be otherwise than reasonable. We notice that in uncivilised and unenlightened ages the value of human life was not appreciated; it was regarded comparatively as a worthless thing, and is so regarded now in heathen and idolatrous countries. If we bear in mind that 360,000 men were employed upon one of the pyramids for nearly twenty years, and think of the sacrifice and disregard of human life which that implies, we shall readily understand that human life in ancient Egypt was a thing of no account. And instances of the like estimate are characteristic of all the great world-empires of antiquity. When, alas! we look back upon the execrable wars of Napoleon, or the Franco-German war of 1869 and 1870, or the Turko-Russian war of three years ago, we may question indeed whether the progress of human sentiment in regard to the value of human life has advanced so much as we may be disposed at times to flatter ourselves; but the very condemnation and disgust with which we cannot but regard these wars may serve justly to confirm the truth of our remarks,

inasmuch as in ancient times there is no reason to believe that the like sentiment was cherished, or at all events to anything like the same extent.

I ask, then, If respect for human life as a sacred and inviolable thing is in any way reasonable, why is it reasonable? Now, we may at once see that the population of the world by man is a thing in itself to be desired, and in accordance with the constitution of nature. That the soil should be uncultivated, that the fruits of the earth should fall ungathered and its harvests perish unreaped, is a condition that must obviously be less to be chosen than one by which the wilderness becomes a garden. Or at all events, given the existence of man, it must be far preferable in the interests of man himself. But the existence of man implies the existence of society, and the existence of society demands the necessity of its being preserved. But if society is to be preserved it can only be by the removal of anything which will tend to destroy it. Suppose, then, for a moment the abolition of the law which protects society. Suppose any man at liberty to take the life of his fellow-man. Such a condition could only result in the destruction of society: man would prey upon man till the garden of this world



would quickly be reduced again to a wilderness. And this would manifestly be detrimental to the prescribed order of things; it would tend to overthrow and annul that which is clearly most in accordance with the constitution of man and nature. It is impossible to represent this matter as one merely of opinion. It is self-evident that it is for the advancement and advantage of man, as well as for the development of the inherent powers of nature, that society should be protected and human life preserved.

And indeed this becomes more and more evident as the mutuality of the obligation which protects life is observed. The instinct of self-preservation is universal. Whatever liberty any one man may claim with regard to the life of his fellow, there is no one who does not dispute that liberty when claimed by others towards himself. Putting the case that he is unwilling to let others live, there is no question as to the jealousy with which he cherishes his own life. No one would admit the right of any other person to take *his* life; and as this is universally true, the principle must be universally mutual in its obligation. If no one has the right to take the life of each individual in succession, the obligation must work round to every indi-

vidual in succession, till it includes all. It is also clear that the right to life which every individual in succession is disposed to claim, though perhaps in the first instance personal, is not merely so. For every individual life has its value also to society at large. Society is a loser by the loss of every individual life. Therefore not only is society bound to acknowledge the rights of each individual to his own life for his personal ends, but it is bound to respect them also for its own ends. Society, therefore, is interested in turn in the life of every individual. It is this which makes suicide a crime against society, for in taking away his own life the suicide deprives society of that upon which it has a just claim, and of something which legitimately belongs to it.

If, then, there is reason to believe, as I have endeavoured to show, that the law which protects human life is reasonable and in conformity with reason, what does this imply? It implies that the preservation of human life is in accordance with the natural principle which the constitution of human society reveals. There is that in almost every one (the exceptions are so few that they may be practically disregarded) that shrinks from taking the life of his fellow only in a lesser degree than that in

which he shrinks from having his own taken. And there is no question that this reluctance, at all events in the second case, is anterior to any precept or law relating to it. Take away any strong impulse, such as hatred, malice, envy, greed, and the like, and it is inconceivable that this reluctance should not be felt all but universally. Why, then, is it so, but because there is that in such an act which does violence to our nature? It is the nature of man to preserve his own life; it is the nature of man to preserve his fellow's life. The natural impulse may be overcome by a counter impulse in any case, but the natural impulse is there, and sooner or later it will make itself felt.

It was so with the first recorded murder. There must have been a natural impulse in Cain to respect the life of his brother before, this impulse being overcome by a stronger one, he rose up against him and slew him; and even afterwards the voice of his brother's blood would not have cried to him from the ground unless, even in the heart of the first murderer, there had been that to which the voice could make its appeal and so be heard.

The same narrative tells us distinctly that it was the Lord who awakened the sense of that voice which cried aloud to Cain. That is to

say, the voice being heard, it is the Lord's voice which it echoes. The standard, therefore, with which it corresponds, which it declares to have been sinned against—the principle in nature which it says has been violated—is the Divine voice, the voice of the Lord. We may use impersonal language about it, and call it a principle, a natural standard of right, and the like, but the only full explanation of the mystery is that there is a personal Lord and Judge speaking by it.

And thus, when the Law says "Thou shalt not kill," just as no man in his senses can deny the righteous force and binding obligation of the Law, so if we ask ourselves who says it, there is only one answer that can be given. "Thou shalt not kill" is a law which you and I cannot but recognise. It is preposterous to dispute it; but from whom does it come? Does it come from our fellow-man? That is a wholly inadequate origin to assign for it. It is not my fellow-man who has a right to say to me "Thou shalt not kill"; or at least, for him to say so—though I do not dispute his right, for we have seen that human life is the property of human society at large—I repeat, for him to say so does not exhaust my obligation. I cannot but feel that there is an anterior law

in harmony with which the interests of society itself move. And this anterior law, if it speaks to me as a person, must surely itself be the voice of a person—that is to say, the law must be the reflection of a will. That I therefore should obey this law must be the will of the person who imposes it upon me.

That the law works in the way it does for the benefit of society generally, and in accordance with the constitution of nature, when it is conceivable that it might work otherwise or that another law might prevail, is surely no slight indication that this particular law, being what it is, is the voice of a will, and if the voice of a will the voice of a person. And therefore the Person who says to me *Thou* must be one who says of Himself *I* and *I am*. In other words, the revelation of the Law as a personal will is coupled with and ultimately runs up into the revelation of a person whose will it is.

And thus we cannot duly respect and reverence the law until we recognise and acknowledge and bow before the Person whose law it is. To regard the law as a lifeless enactment, a dead precept, is to do dishonour to the will that it implies and the Person who gave it. The very form, therefore, in which the law is couched—as a personal restriction which is universally binding,

and is addressed to man as man—is itself a witness to the being of one who has dominion over man, and has a right to lay upon him, and alone has a right to lay upon him, a commandment the authority of which he cannot but acknowledge with deference, and which is so manifestly in keeping with his natural constitution.

Nor must it be forgotten that the very age of the Law—given as it was probably some fifteen centuries before Christ, at a time and in a period of the world's history when it is perfectly well known that human life was for the most part regarded as a thing of nought, is no slight corroboration of our belief that the giving of the law which made human life sacred, and the giving of it in this form, is a proof and indication of it as a Divine revelation. We, in fact, with our cultivated conscience, as the result of long experience and rich and varied education, cannot but see the natural and inherent strength of the law protecting life; but it is another question whether we could of ourselves have discovered it, and still more whether at the age when it was given it could have been formulated as it was.

At all events, if the law is the result of revelation, then, like revelation, it must be dependent

for its acceptance upon the existence of that by which alone revelation can be received—namely, faith. If the law that protects life is the law of God, then we can only receive that law, supposing it to be the law of God, by the exercise of that faith by which we receive God. When there is no faith there can be no apprehension of God, and therefore no true apprehension of the law of God. But when there is the existence of the spirit of faith, then the very law of life itself, by which we all live, and by which human society is preserved, becomes to us the token of the will of God and the audible expression of the voice of God.

We are very apt to have material notions of God ; and in fact, being complex creatures as we are, with bodies as well as souls, it is impossible altogether to avoid them. And thus we may speak of the audible expression of the voice of God ; but let us not be misled by the figure, for what is this audible expression of the voice of God but the unheard and inaudible and invisible bent and impulse of our truest nature, which of itself is a witness to the being and the will of God ?

Nor, again, let us ever forget that nature, in her simplicity and majesty and truth, is the reflex of the will of God. The law is holy,

and the commandment holy and just and good. Sin is the deviation from our true nature which has perverted nature, as it has obscured and perverted conscience. It is not nature which is wrong, but sin which has done wrong to nature, and done wrong to the law of God expressed in nature. When we return from sin we return to the law of God, which is our true nature. It is an indication of our sin that nature has been identified with sin and used in a dubious sense, and thereby the work of God has been dishonoured. But if we go back to the standard by which we are constituted, we shall find that that standard is the law of God, and in discovering the standard we shall discover God. We shall then find that He has written His law upon our hearts, and set His mark there, and left His witness there; and to acknowledge that will be to acknowledge Him.

And that acknowledgment will be a revelation. We shall not discover Him or find Him out for ourselves, but He will reveal Himself to us. He will say to us, "I am the Lord thy God: Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." For is it not obvious that the law which protects and preserves human life, when it is interpreted spiritually, can only be satisfied in proportion as it passes



from a negative to a positive precept? Human life is not protected as long as in any case it is exposed to injury which we ourselves should avoid. And thus, even here, in a command which we are apt to regard as applying only or almost only to criminals, a channel of almost infinite application is opened out. And in fact the question "Am I my brother's keeper?" which was the question asked by the first murderer, is by no means alien from the spirit of many who would vehemently resist the imputation of being murderers. And is not this a head under which we are all verily guilty concerning our brother?

Lastly, the spiritual interpretation of the law which protects life demanded that in the highest and typical instance obedience to the law should only be exhibited under conditions which involved its violation. If the counterpart of "Thou shalt not kill" is "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," then we can at once see that the only one who should absolutely fulfil the law would be one who should submit to the violation of the law at the hands of his fellow-man. Life was protected because, being the gift of God, and given in the image of God, it was too precious and too sacred to be thrown away. But its preciousness and sanctity would

alone be seen by the sacrifice of which they were deemed worthy,—and this was the life of the pattern Man and the Son of God. And not till that life was taken away and restored again, could man really learn the value of that which he was ready enough to prize in himself, though but too apt to depreciate it in others; and so when Christ came He enhanced infinitely the value of human life, for it was He who said, as He alone could say, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

## XIV.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”—EXODUS xx. 14.

WE have seen that the sixth commandment involved, at all events to a certain extent, the idea of property, inasmuch as human life seemed to be regarded as the property or possession of the individual himself, and in some sense of society at large. In this way we found that suicide was a crime committed against society, inasmuch as it deprived society of its share in the work and usefulness of the person guilty of it, to and upon which society had a just right and a valid claim; while it is clear that he who takes away the life of another takes away that to which no one but the possessor has any right, unless indeed—which is quite conceivable under certain circumstances—his own right to it is forfeited.

We pass on now to deal with the seventh commandment, with a view to ascertaining what light it sheds on the origin and authority of the moral law.

And here also it is plain that the idea of

property or ownership may readily enter in, even if it be not that idea which lies at the root of it. The act of committing adultery is not defined, but it is at once understood as that of taking or taking away another man's wife or another woman's husband. But we no sooner state it thus than we bring into it somewhat of the notion of property. Whether or not that is primarily the reason why this commandment is given, we need not stop now to determine; it is obvious that the breach of it involves the violation of a law we have not yet considered—namely, the law of property. It is not, however, exclusively on this ground that the seventh commandment is to be dealt with, any more than the sixth, but only incidentally. It is clear that these three commandments, the sixth, seventh, and eighth, may be regarded as laying the foundation of all moral action between man and man in three of the most important particulars—those, namely, of the respect due to human life, of the respect due to the family, and of the respect due to possession or property.

It is to be observed, then, first that the seventh commandment implies and necessitates and sanctions the idea of the family in contradistinction to that of indiscriminate confusion.

That which is forbidden is that which of necessity obliterates the distinctions and limits of family life and destroys the idea of the family.

And of course a moment's thought will at once show that the principle of the family is the safeguard of human society, just as much as in another sphere the law which preserves individual life is the safeguard of human society. It is the family which is the unit of civilisation. It is not possible to contemplate on an equal basis the state of society in which the principle of the family obtains, and that, if it can anywhere be met with, in which this principle is unknown. But if this be so, what a marvellous and conclusive testimony it brings to the correctness and accuracy of adaptation with which the principle of the family is felt to be correspondent with the constitution of our nature! Here, again, then, we discover at once that the moral law runs *pari passu* in exact parallelism with the deepest requirements of our nature, and tends to its greatest well-being. Abolish the notion of the family, and human society would be overthrown: it would become a ruinous heap.

The question, therefore, is whether this is a principle which society could discover for itself, independently of higher sanctions or precepts,

and whether there is any ground to believe that such higher sanctions and precepts have been given. Now, there can be no doubt that the idea of the family was known and respected in many nations where such knowledge could not have been owing in any degree to the Mosaic Law. Wherever, therefore, the principle of the family was held in honour, there a fresh indication might be discovered of the natural tendency of human society to develop in a way most in accordance with its own constitution. It is felt, in the great majority of cases, among nations, that the idea of the family is the best and most advantageous expression of the social life. It would therefore be arbitrary and audacious in the extreme to attempt to substitute any other.

It must be remembered, however, that accepting the idea of the family in some form or other as the model idea of the original principle upon which society was constituted, it is by no means certain what that form is to be, and whether or not it is to admit, as it did among the Hebrews themselves, of polygamy. The expression of the Mosaic law on this point, or at all events of the practice following it, would seem to be very ambiguous and indefinite. If adultery is not defined, it is nowhere prescribed

in the Old Testament that Hebrew social life was to be monogamous, while the facility afforded to divorce must have opened the door to very great disorders. It was reserved for Christ Himself to speak with authority on this point, and for His great apostle to declare distinctly, "Let every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband." And there can be no question whatever but that this has ever been felt to be the emphatic and definitive expression of the mind of the Christian Church in this matter. As Christians, therefore, we need inquire no further into the obligation resting upon us in respect of the seventh commandment, because it is perfectly clear and explicit what is meant. However that commandment was understood to apply to the people of the old dispensation, it is plain that to us its restrictions have been increased rather than relaxed.

But I want to inquire what guarantee those have who reject the Divine authority of Scripture that they will be able to direct and determine their conduct in the all-important and vital matter of family life and the relations involved in it. Suppose they decide that the authority of St. Paul, so far as it rests upon him, is invalid, how are they to be resolved that his authority

in this particular matter is *per se* valid? I take it that this is *the* question which society has a right to ask of those who would reconstruct it without reference or deference to Christian principles, and it is one which they also are bound to answer. Is the expression of the mind of society so unmistakable, apart from any original Divine precept in the matter, as to make the landmarks of human obligation in regard to the subject-matter of the seventh commandment so fixed and permanent that we may dispense with the Divine command and have no fear for the result upon society at large? We are told that this is so, but can we be sure of it? Are we to be given over to the uncertain verdict of a bare majority in the matter? and are we sure that that verdict will always be unalterable?—because, if not, then it will be clearly desirable that we should be able to fall back upon something which will not fail us, and which being Divine is of necessity not liable to change.

And it must be admitted that the position now contemplated is of its very nature experimental. It has not as yet on a large scale been tried whether mankind can do without any Divine restraints. The problem of an atheistic community has yet to be tried on a



large scale. Because all the society of the old world was quite otherwise. Religion entered largely into the social, material, and political life of all the ancients. They felt that they could not live without the Gods. It was reserved for these latter days, after having been enlightened with the true light from heaven, to wish to ascertain by experiment whether the darkness is not preferable, whether it is not possible for man to develop freely and fully without reference to God, and whether the permanent basis of morality is not altogether independent of religion.

And it seems that the seventh commandment supplies the very best possible test for the validity of this position, inasmuch as it is quite evident that society may be able to protect itself in the matter of human life, and of personal property, but it is not quite so clear how we are to arrive at fixed principles in matters relating to the seventh commandment if we repudiate the restrictions of that commandment as Divine. Because though in one aspect the seventh commandment may be regarded as relating to a department of the law of property, and so be covered by it, yet this is not by any means its only aspect, but much rather it concerns the entire relation between

man and woman. And it is absolutely certain, as a matter of history, that the religion of Jesus Christ has purified and elevated this relation to a degree before unknown and unexampled. The question is, therefore, whether without borrowing from the sanctions of the Christian religion we can maintain morality at this elevation. And this, I say, is a matter of experience, or rather of experiment, which cannot be put to the test and proved in one or two generations. Certainly, as far as experience has yet gone, we may without hesitation predict its total failure as an experiment. If God has not prescribed a right and a wrong in these matters, who has? It is certain that the prescription of society is historically variable, and worth nothing. And if we cannot discover the standard in society, can we discover it in ourselves apart from God? If we are conscious of a right and a wrong, who is it makes the right or the wrong, and why are we conscious of it? Does it vary with the individual? and if it does not, how can there be any common authoritative standard which does not point to a person, inasmuch as it deals only with persons and lays its prohibitions only upon persons, while the rest of animate nature gives no indication of its law?

We are led, therefore, as before, to discern in the "Thou shalt not" a witness to the presence of a Person who not only commands, but has also authority to do so; and it is this conception which alone seems adequate to account for the general witness there is in humanity to the consciousness of a right and a wrong, however vague and undecided it may be, while it alone supplies the definite standard of authority and direction which the nature and constitution of society so imperatively demands. It is God and God only who has laid the foundations of the family deep and broad, and made the restrictions incidental to it the safeguard and preservation of society.

For here also the principle of *reciprocity* extends and is in force, and the principles which are valid in the case of any one family are valid in the case of all; and as there is no one who is not a sister or a daughter, a brother or a son, so there is no one to whom the obligations arising from these relationships are not due, nor any one on whom they are not binding. The apostolic precept, therefore, given in a particular instance is of general and universal application: "The elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity." It is because the sacred limitations of family life are not duly revered,

and because they are not seen to be of *universal* extent, and reciprocal obligation, that the terrible confusion is introduced into our social life that more than anything else cries aloud to God for judgment, while it witnesses in unmistakable language to the existence of a God who will surely execute it.

And it is here that the religion of Jesus Christ comes in, with its blessed sanctions and purifying influences; for every family, with its root in fatherhood, is a token and earnest of the fatherhood of God and the family in heaven. If the family as the unit of human society is the handiwork of God on earth, it is so because it is fashioned after the pattern of a Divine ideal which exists only in its perfection in Christ. And thus we see how it was in the nature of things that Christ should liken the kingdom of heaven to a marriage, and that He should first assert His authority over nature at the marriage feast, because it is not only marriage which is the foundation of human society as it now exists, but it is marriage also which is the very type of the reconstruction of human society in Christ. It is the family which, like the very fairest of the plants that grow on earth, is destined to be transplanted into the soil of heaven, that it may for ever flourish and abound.

there in all its unimagined and inconceivable spotless and unsullied beauty.

And therefore it is the religion of Christ, and that alone, which shows as nothing else can show the heinous enormity and disgrace of breaking up the barriers of that which God has fenced about as His own special and reserved possession, and introducing disorder and lawlessness where He has ordained order, peace, and purity—in the confines of the Christian family, for the protection and preservation of which He has enacted the seventh commandment; nor can there be anything more important as a point of practical morals than to inculcate upon our sons and daughters the reverence which is due to the sanctity of the family as the type of society at large, which in its constitution is but an aggregate of families, and to teach them that the rights for the maintenance of which they would be especially sensitive and jealous in the case of their own family involve them also in reciprocal obligations with regard to every other family and to every member of every other family. If this principle were duly recognised and acted upon, it would be found to be co-extensive in its operation with the working of the seventh commandment, for the violation of that commandment in any respect is found to

be the violation of the principle of family life and of that which it involves.

Nor can we account for the educated conscience which recognises the sanctity of the family-idea as founded in marriage, and the fact that it, and it alone, is consistent with and conducive to the highest well-being of the race, without arriving at the conclusion that herein is a revelation of the will of God. It is He, and He only, who has laid these foundations and set these barriers, and the judgment of God therefore must surely overtake those who attempt to lessen or remove them.

So far, therefore, as the origin and authority of the moral law are capable of being discovered by investigation and experiment, we seem justified in deciding that this particular precept of it points to no other, while it does point most distinctly and significantly to Him. It is He, and He only, who is our Father in heaven; it is He, and He only, who is the Father of the reconstituted family on earth in the person of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son; and it is He, and He only, of whom every fatherhood in heaven and earth is named, and in whom alone it can find its primordial type and origin or its ultimate end and object.

XV.

“Thou shalt not steal.”—EXOD. xx. 15.

IF the sixth and seventh commandments involve, as we have seen, the recognition of the law of property, it is self-evident that that law is not only recognised but enunciated by the eighth commandment. In accordance with the aim and method of these lectures, we have to ascertain if possible what light is thrown by the existence and general recognition of this law upon its own origin and authority. Why is it wrong to steal? and what does its being wrong show? and what is the principle involved in the idea of stealing? It is evident, then, that the law which prohibits stealing inculcates and recognises the sacredness of property. Take away the notion of property, and you abolish the possibility of stealing. A man walking among the mountains and valleys of Switzerland, who gathers the wild flowers and the wild strawberries, does not steal them, because he takes that which is no man's property, which belongs to no one or to every one, and therefore to him

as well as others ; but the man who walking through a private orchard or garden plucks the flowers or fruit without the permission, tacit or express, of the owner, is unquestionably guilty of a theft, the more conspicuous in proportion to the privacy and seclusion of the garden or orchard ; and this because they are not his—because they belong to some one else. Clearly, therefore, the law which steps forward and enunciates a precept forbidding such an act unmistakably recognises a principle which is the foundation of the idea and the fact of property. The law which proclaims this precept gives its sanction and sets its seal to the idea of possession. In short, the eighth commandment is intrinsically opposed to and incompatible with the theory of an absolute community of goods. This is the first point we have clearly to apprehend. If the sanction of the eighth commandment is acknowledged, the principle of possession as a legitimate condition is admitted.

So far, then, as this law is just and valid, there is and can be nothing wrong in my possessing a gold watch, or a valuable horse, or an acre of land, or a hundred watches, or a hundred acres, or a hundred thousand acres : once admit the principle of possession, and you shut the door to the principle of the community of goods. And once



admit this principle, and you admit it absolutely and infinitely. If I may have one watch or one acre, there is no reason why I may not have two or five or fifty, or a hundred, or a hundred thousand—provided, that is, I come by them lawfully or in accordance with the sanction and restrictions of the law which sanctions my having them at all.

Now, it is very important that we should distinctly apprehend this principle, because a notion seems to be gaining ground in the present day that there is something in the abstract wrong in a man's possessing, for example, a hundred thousand acres. But surely if possession is in any sense lawful, the law can hardly be consistent with itself in assigning any limit to possession, so long as its essential principle is not violated.

Into the question of the land being the inalienable property of mankind at large, so that all men have a right to it, which the great possessors of it ROB them of, I do not purpose to enter, any further than to observe that it is impossible even to state this theory without assuming the very principle that I maintain—for he who robs another steals from him that to which he has a right, natural or acquired, which is assuming the idea of pro-

perty, the theory of possession. Besides, if a man may possess a horse or a cow or a sheep, what is there naturally unlawful in his possessing a piece of ground? and if one piece, why not more? and if more, why not many more?

We have, then, next to inquire whether the idea of property, the theory of possession, is or is not in accordance with the natural constitution of society. Is it apparently better for society that the notion of private possession should or should not obtain and be acted upon? Would it be better, as society is constituted, that there should be no such thing as property—that all things should be common, or the reverse? There can be no question that the experience of mankind seems to have brought them to the conclusion that the idea of property is one that must be maintained go where you will, even among savages, and this principle is known and acted on. Community of goods is found by experience to be impracticable and impossible; but community of goods is our only alternative if we put aside the idea of property. And, indeed, even community of goods is hardly an antithesis to property, because in a condition in which all things were common no one could say that anything

was his own, for the simple reason that it would belong to some one else as much as to him, and to him as much as to any one else. Even here, therefore, we should scarcely preclude altogether the notion of property, though it would exist under altered circumstances.

It seems, then, useless to moot the question whether in the abstract it would be better for society to abolish altogether the idea of property, because society seems to be agreed that it is an idea that must be maintained, and if so, the principle involved is one that must be in accordance with the constitution of society. One may certainly infer that if any society of men were to start with the principle of community of goods, it would infallibly work round to the recognition of property, just as any society which started with the abstract theory of the equality of mankind would by the mere force of circumstances be constrained before long to acknowledge facts that would contradict that theory and overthrow it.

If, then, society is constituted on a basis which involves the recognition of the law of property, the constitution of society bears witness to the wisdom and accuracy of that law. It is a law which is in harmony with the constitution of society, and is intended for the mutual advan-

tage and protection of the individuals composing it. To assert and maintain this law, then, is to be jealous for the interests and welfare of society. It promotes the greatest happiness not only of the greatest number, but of all, because it is jealous not only of the interests of some, but of the interests of all ; for the law which restrains me restrains my fellow as well as me, and the law which protects me protects my fellow as well as me. It presses in its operation equally and evenly in all directions.

If, then, this law is one which is in accordance with the constitution of mankind, and seeks the benefit of mankind, what is its origin and authority? Is it a law voluntarily imposed upon society by society itself, or does it point to any higher, deeper, or external origin? Is it an arbitrary or a natural law? Is it a law which, being invented and imposed by society upon itself, is one which society also, if it pleased, could abrogate and repeal? Or is it antecedent in its authority to the voluntary action of society, so that society is bound by it and unable to shake it off? Is it, in short, human or Divine? What witness, in fact, does the law bear to its own origin?

Who is it, then, that says to me "Thou shalt not steal"? Is this merely the form in which

the expression of a universal compact among men is cast, or is it the voice of a person who has authority over me? Is it society that speaks, or is it God? We have seen that the recognition of the law is not only general, but practically universal; and as far as it is so, it cannot be the result of any general compact, but is rather the spontaneous recognition of an independent and external principle. For instance, if the law were the result of a general compact, how would such a compact affect the generations of men yet unborn? It is evident that no such compact could reasonably be supposed to bind the progeny, say, of two centuries to come; and yet do we not feel that every man born into this world inherits, so to say, his obligation to this law, no less than he does his obligation to the law which prohibits murder? It seems, therefore, that the authority of the law in this respect is antecedent even to our own existence. When we were born we found the law not only already in operation, but claiming its obligation upon us in spite of ourselves, and asserting its authority over us not merely as the existing law of society but as a law anterior to any of the compacts and conventional restrictions of society.

If, then, this was so, why was it so? and what

does its being so point us to? It surely points us to a power and a will which antecedently to our existence and naturally has authority over us that we cannot dispute, and that we cannot refuse to recognise without doing violence to the instincts of our nature. For if this is not so, the law of property is merely a conventional law; but no law that is merely conventional appeals in like manner to the deepest instincts of our nature. If, however, we cannot sin against the eighth commandment without feeling that we do wrong, is not the sense of doing wrong that we feel itself a witness to the presence of a Power that has a right to say to us "Thou shalt not steal"? And it is this right on His part being set at nought and done violence to which makes it wrong for us to act in such a way as to produce this feeling. If a thing is right or wrong, that which makes it right or wrong must be something antecedent to our nature or inherent in the nature itself. The law of property which says "Thou shalt not steal," however consonant and in accordance with our nature and constitution, is rather antecedent to than inherent in it; and so far as it is it points us to a Person who has the power and authority to say to us Thou shalt or Thou shalt not.

The law, then, is a witness to a God proclaimed and revealed, even if there is no power in the law alone and of itself to reveal Him. The law of property was acknowledged and obeyed before it was given from Sinai, whether or not it revealed God; but when God revealed Himself by the giving of the law, the law so given was the witness to the revelation of God. And so no sooner is God proclaimed to us as our Maker and Judge, than we see that the law and our involuntary recognition of its authority in our own hearts is a witness to His being and presence. We find and feel that the law which bows our will and claims our authority does so because it is the law of God. The voice with which it speaks is His voice, and the will which it declares is His will. It is not, therefore, any human conventionality or compact which has set boundaries about possession, and established the law of property, and said to man "Thou shalt not steal," but it is the God and Father of our race, it is the King and Judge of man, it is the Constituter and Architect of human society, who for the benefit and well-being of society has prescribed that the goods which are the natural endowments of society should not be indiscriminately scattered among all alike, so that none should have a personal share in any

but that they should be unequally distributed among men, and that the rights by which they are held should be recognised and respected by all alike, and that to do so is for the advantage of all alike. The recognition of this law is not merely the protection of the rich against the poor, and of the strong against the weak, but equally the defence of the poor against the rich, and of the weak against the strong. But then, while the law most unquestionably asserts and defends the theory of property, and in so doing lays the foundation of the difference between rich and poor—for possession prepares the way for accumulation, and allows of it—yet most certainly the recognition of the law is intended also to carry with it the recognition of those obligations which possession and property involve.

Once in the history of our race an effort was made to reform and reconstitute the law of property by a voluntary abnegation on the part every member of a select society of the rights of property. Each literally surrendered all that he had for the benefit of the rest ; and this was the spontaneous effort that was made by the regenerated early church. It was no doubt a noble impulse, and it was the earnest of that to which under other circumstances regenerated human society may one day attain, or that may



be reserved for it ; but the very transient duration of that effort, and its almost immediate abandonment, showed very plainly that the effort or the aspiration it implied was premature. It is not for society as at present constituted to substitute community of goods for the law of property ; but rather this law is God's own landmark, which He has set for the regulation of the inheritance of mankind as long as the world lasts. But the assertion of the law is inadequate and defective as long as the obligations that go along with it are unacknowledged. Possession only fulfils its idea so long as it is possession held in dependence upon God ; and possession that is held in dependence upon God involves a trust—a trust bestowed by Him for the good of others, and in subordination to the claims and demands of their well-being. It is when possession and property are thus seen to be the fulfilment of a Divine will that they become likewise significant reminders of the high responsibilities of the trust which they involve. And these responsibilities, of course, vary as possession itself varies. As soon as any one of us says inwardly that aught of the things which he possesses, be they what they may—lands or houses, gold or silver, intellect or influence—is his own, absolutely, so that no one

else has any claim on him because of it, he sins against the ideal law of property itself, because he virtually fails to see in that law any manifestation of the will of God in the distribution of wealth which He has entrusted to each for the good of all. In proportion as the law of property is not merely a social compact or conventional arrangement of mankind, but a Divine sanction fraught with obligations alike human and Divine, it becomes recognised as the expression of the Divine will, and is traced back to its true origin in the mind of God. And as it is only when we see its Divine origin and authority that we see its true dignity, so it is only when we assign it to its true Author that we discern how far-reaching its purpose is and how beneficent its scope. But when the law of property is thus traced home to the intention and will of God, His bounty and beneficence is in some sense communicated to His gift; and as we do not lose sight of the Giver in His gift, but are bound by it more and more closely to Him, so it becomes to us a continual pledge of His goodness, and filling our hearts with gratitude to Him, the Giver of all good, it disposes us to show to our fellow-men the like goodness we have ourselves received, and to reflect to others the image of that grace and benevolence which has shined on us.

## XVI.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”—EXODUS xx. 16.

THE ninth commandment introduces us into an entirely different domain or department of law from the three previous commandments. Its object is in no sense the recognition or enforcement of the rights of property, but much rather of the law of truth. What, then, is there in the nature of things which lays us under the obligation of this law of truth? Why is it incumbent on any one of us to speak the truth, and why is it wrong in any one to tell a lie? The question may appear to some to be sufficiently absurd, but no inquiry into the origin and authority of the moral law, no researches into the foundations of morality, would be complete without an attempt to answer it.

We may note, therefore, first, the form which the precept takes: Thou shalt not answer against thy neighbour as a false witness, or thou shalt not cause a false witness to answer against thy neighbour. In either case the

presence of some judicial court or trial is implied ; but though the special case contemplated is of this nature, the breadth of spirit with which it is obvious that all the commandments must be interpreted forbids us to confine its application to any such case, and requires us to understand it much rather as a distinct assertion of the universal authority of the law of truth.

But yet we must not fail to observe that a condition of society is implied in which judicial processes of some kind are recognised and assumed to exist. It is clearly supposed, therefore, that society has some sort of right to constitute and organise itself, and to appoint those to whom ultimate appeal must be made between man and man. It is inferred, therefore, that there is inherent in society a standard of appeal and an instinctive principle of discrimination between right and wrong. False witness is not to be borne, because it will tend to cloud the recognition of this principle and perplex its course of action. At all events, therefore, the reality of the difference between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, is declared, and the obligation of man to be bound thereby affirmed. But if so, this is surely a significant and important fact. Whence is it that there is in society a power of this kind ? Is the difference between

right and wrong merely a subjective one, accidental and imaginary, or is there something, in fact, of which it is the reflection? If it is an objective reality, and resides, as it unquestionably does, in the nature of things, what does this show but that the fact of such being the nature of things is a witness to an original standard or principle which proposes itself as that by which they must be judged? The tongue of the balance does not make the weight; it only declares what the weight is. The tongue of the balance is but the index of an unseen reality, which we cannot touch, but only feel. So truth is the correspondence of anything with an ideal standard which we call reality, falsehood the deviation therefrom; right the observance of an unwritten law, wrong the violation of it. It is this essential difference between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, that the very wording of the ninth commandment assumes. It does not condescend to prove the fact, but takes it for granted. It implies, moreover, not only that the difference exists in itself, but also that the perception of it is inherent in society. Thus, while the precepts of the moral law clearly enunciate and define the limits of right and wrong action, they by no means profess to determine them arbitrarily, but much rather in

defining them to reveal the essential principles upon which they are based and from which they spring. The faculty of discrimination is part of the inherent prerogative of mankind,—so much so that this faculty is the very foundation of intelligence and wisdom, and in certain languages—as for instance the language of the Old Testament—is expressly regarded as identical therewith. But unless this faculty actually creates the difference of which it takes cognisance it stands to reason that there is something answering to this difference in the world of realities. A thing is true because it accurately corresponds with this reality; it is false because it deviates from and contradicts it. We cannot but note the difference, and in proportion to our intelligence shall do so the more carefully; but the difference exists before we note it, and in no sense arises from the fact of our noting it, any more than the existence of the sun is dependent upon the existence or the soundness of the eye that sees it.

Supposing, however, that we are prepared to admit the truth of all this, it still remains for us to answer the questions with which we started—Why is it incumbent upon us to speak the truth? Why is it wrong to tell a lie? And here the object of these discourses will have

been entirely missed if we do not at once reply Certainly not because the ninth commandment enjoins the one and forbids the other—however emphatically and truly in either case it may do this—but for some reason antecedent to the giving of the Decalogue, enunciated, indeed, but not created thereby. For the giving of the Law did not make right to be right nor wrong to be wrong—we must never lose sight of that fact,—it only declared with authority what was right and what was wrong. That it did so under the conditions and circumstances related, is itself confirmed by the very nature of the law that was so declared, and thus the nature of the law was the witness to its own origin. It not only bore witness to itself as written on the conscience, but also bore witness to the authority that then enforced it.

Why is it, then, the duty of every one to speak the truth? This will be best seen by inquiring what are the consequences of not speaking it; and these are mainly twofold—namely, the consequences to ourselves, and the consequences to our fellow-creatures. What, then, are the consequences to ourselves of diverging from the truth, of telling a lie? Surely the first and foremost is the sense of violence done to ourselves which we thereby cause. For if any one main-

tains that the feeling which results from telling a lie is the same as that which results from speaking the truth, I fear he is thereby placed far beyond the reach of argument. In fact, no one could maintain this who was not prepared to maintain also that to tell a lie was the same thing as to speak the truth. And this would be to fly in the face of that most incorruptible of all witnesses, the unconscious testimony of language. First, then, there is the feeling of a wrench or jar being given to the nature—of something which gives the sense of a shock or surprise—of something which awakes the consciousness, and puts it, so to say, on the alert and the alarm.

Perhaps it is a further consequence that a degree of callousness is produced by familiarity with the practice, for this would not be the case if there were not something capable of becoming hard. You can blunt the edge of a fine razor, but not of an iron bar which has no edge. Thus, if habitual liars lose by practice the sense of telling a lie, this is one of the consequences of the habit. But surely no one can regard with equal approbation or with indifference one who habitually tells lies and is hardened in doing it, and one who always speaks the truth. And thus a further consequence of telling lies is that



obvious and undeniable degradation of the character—that breaking down and demolition of the whole moral edifice which every moral man cannot but feel, when it becomes like a ruined and dismantled tower, no longer fit for the habitation of man, but the dwelling-place of noxious birds and unclean beasts.

Upon the consequences to our fellows it is needless to dilate. It is clear that the whole fabric of society must go to pieces if once the habit of lying should obtain to any extent, and in proportion as it does. All the intercourse of mankind is based on the supposition that truth and not falsehood is accepted as current among men. So wisely and significantly—though here again the testimony is unconscious and inaudible—are the common formulas adopted and employed in written correspondence of “yours truly” and “yours faithfully.” Now conceive the havoc that would be wrought by the general introduction of uncertainty and suspicion into the transactions and the dealings of mankind one with another. So accurately has St. Paul hit the ruling principle in this matter when he enforces the precept “Speak every man truth with his neighbour” with the reason assigned,—“FOR we are members one of another.” It is manifestly for the good of society that men should speak the

truth, and it is clearly the duty of every member of society to seek and advance the welfare of every other member of it. But that this is the case with society is the result of the constitution of society,—that is to say, society has been framed upon the principle that its welfare is promoted or impaired according as truth is or is not commonly spoken, and that therefore no member of society can make himself so independent of society as not to be bound by obligations to seek its welfare, even as he has a right to have his own well-being protected and advanced by society. Forasmuch, therefore, as to tell a lie is an impediment to the progress and the free action of society, it is incumbent upon every member of society to speak the truth. And this is surely the original and antecedent reason that is suggested by the very terms of the ninth commandment. The inherent and essential motive is the implied welfare and the personal rights of the neighbour. There is one dwelling nigh unto us, living with and by us, who is under obligations to us and is entitled to rights and obligations from us. It is an infringement of his rights, a violation of his privileges and his integrity, if we say what is untrue about him. We not only have no right to damage his fair fame, but we are bound also

to believe that his fair fame is of the nature of a trust committed to our keeping ; and we shall be guilty of unfaithfulness if we betray it,—of unfaithfulness to him, inasmuch as he has the same right to expect this of us that we have to look for it from him. But can we stop there ? Shall we not also be unfaithful to some one else ? If in damaging his fair fame by an untruth we do violence to our own nature, as we surely do, is not this also the breach of an implied trust committed to us by Him who made that nature what it is?—for surely this complicated tissue and texture of interests and responsibilities speaks of a person, a will, a design, an intent, and not of an accident, a chance, a lifeless and unconscious impulse. Had this been so, it would surely have been difficult to say why there should be any check felt in speaking a lie which is not felt in speaking the truth. The natural, nay, the only conceivable interpretation of this involuntary check, is that as the one is in accordance with the constitution of our nature, and the other not, so this constitution is a witness that it is not a matter of indifference absolutely whether we speak truth or falsehood, any more than it is to our own well being ; but that there are in our moral nature indications of a will which has ruled and determined that it shall be as it is

rather than otherwise, and which, as a matter of fact, has not only spoken in this original constitution, but also virtually speaks every time conscious violence is done to it. In fact, the moral nature of man cannot be explained but by the postulate of a moral Being as the Author of it, who has declared it as His will that human action shall take a definite moral course in preference to an immoral one, as is witnessed by the effects of such action upon the individual and upon society. Whether we call this, with Mr. Matthew Arnold, "a tendency not ourselves which makes for righteousness," or whether, in less quaint and crabbed and more intelligible language, we call it God, it matters not. If there is a tendency in the world which makes for righteousness, that is surely a very strong proof that the Maker of the world is a righteous Being; for that the world should have no maker and yet tend to righteousness rather than unrighteousness, is inconceivable, while that the world should tend to righteousness and yet be the work of a being who is unrighteous is impossible.

It seems, then, to be not altogether hopeless to find some answer to the questions Why is it our duty to speak the truth? Why is it wrong to tell a lie? In doing the one we act in

accordance with our nature, in doing the other we do violence to our nature; in doing the one we apparently fulfil the will of our Maker, in doing the other we go counter to His will and resist it.

Who, then, is it who says to us, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour"? Is it Moses, or is it any human lawgiver? If so, it is plain that before the promulgation of any such precept it was not unlawful to do so. But in the nature of things there never was a time when it was lawful—when it could be a matter of indifference whether or not we spoke the truth to and about our neighbour. When, therefore, Moses said "Thou shalt not bear false witness," he merely spoke in the name of One who spoke by him. He revealed and declared a law to which the conscience before-time might be more or less insensible, but which it could not but recognise and allow as soon as it was declared. It is of the nature of truth to be eternal; truth may be discovered or revealed, it cannot be created; that which we create is the semblance of truth, but that which is true is anterior to our discovery of it. When, therefore, the conscience first responded to the righteousness of the precept "Thou shalt not bear false witness," it merely recognised a

fact which was a fact before, and which from all eternity was destined to be a fact as soon as the conditions arose which should admit of it—that is, as soon as there should arise a neighbour. Now, there is only One who can speak to us with authority about our neighbour, and that is He who has made him to be our neighbour. If it is a mere accident that we have a neighbour, if we merely happen to be so many units lying here and there like so many stones, it is absurd to talk of duty: there can be no such thing as duty. Duty can only arise when the relation of mutuality arises, when reciprocity begins; and reciprocity is not a relation that is voluntarily assumed, but one that is involuntarily imposed. It is not of my will or my neighbour's will, that I have a neighbour; but if he is my neighbour, and in proportion as he is, it can only be because some one external to us both has made him so.

Thus we see that the tendency of the Decalogue as it advances is to develop the conception of the neighbour. The sixth, seventh, and eighth commandments imply his existence, but the ninth and tenth only recognise his being expressly. The more delicate the relationship, the more delicate and subtle the

obligations it involves, while the delicacy of these obligations themselves depends upon the recognition of the delicacy of the relationship. If I have a neighbour, and if he *is* my neighbour, I must speak truly to and about him, and not injure him even in thought; but I shall certainly fail to appreciate these obligations if I do not truly appreciate the fact of his being my neighbour, and I shall certainly not appreciate the fact of his being my neighbour, except as I rise to the apprehension of the Being who has made him to be so. In proportion as I recognise this relationship as the appointment of a gracious God who is our common Father, I shall realise the magnitude and importance of the obligations that flow therefrom. If, therefore, there is any one who says to me "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour," that person must be God, for no one else has or can have any moral authority over me, and no one but God can call into existence the neighbourly relationship. But if this commandment is spoken to me, and I hear in my conscience the voice of it, and acknowledge its truth and majesty, then does not that fact point me to one conclusion—that there is an ultimate fountain of law, and that the fountain of law is the foun-

tain also of my being—that I and the moral law whose majesty I cannot but acknowledge are co-ordinate in origin—that the moral law is as deep as my own existence, that it springs from the still deep waters of primæval being, and that if it can and does speak to me as “Thou,” it can only be because it speaks with the authority and the voice of God, and in thus speaking to me as a separate and isolated being it utters the solemn reminder that I am twin brother to this “stern daughter of the voice of God,” and that He who made me in the womb is my Lawgiver and my Judge?



XVII.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour’s.”—EXODUS xx. 17.

WHEN this commandment is repeated in Deuteronomy, it appears with certain minute verbal alterations, such as the substitution of another word for *desiring* the neighbour’s wife and the addition of *his field* to the objects that are not to be so desired. Those who make it their business, as it is their pleasure, to detect anything like a discrepancy in narratives ostensibly sacred, and especially in duplicate words which are equally ascribed to the Almighty, have not suffered this fact to escape them, and have been eager to make the most of it. “We can see for ourselves that God cannot have spoken both sets of words with their variations, as He is stated to have done, at one and the same time. One set, therefore, must be the work of the lawgiver, who nevertheless claims Divine authority for both.” We are placed,

therefore, in this dilemma—which is the original form of the words? while it is suggested that our only rational mode of escape is to reject both. Now, not to lay any stress upon the manifest fact that the repetition of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy professes to be but the hortatory enforcement of precepts already recorded, and therefore may well be allowed the innocent licence of additional copulas, transpositions, verbal changes, and the like, without sacrificing its claim to substantial and essential accuracy, is it not obvious that thus to insist upon the *ipsissima verba* which the Lord spoke being known, before we can be sure that He spoke at all, is a reversal of all the ordinary conditions of evidence. The prime minister rises in his place in Parliament and makes a speech upon a particular subject. In three or four journals his speech is reported, with minor differences: are we to reject all because they do not minutely correspond? Or, yet further, are we to discredit the fact that he spoke at all because we cannot be perfectly certain of the exact words he used? Would this be reasonable or logical—nay, more, would it be common sense to do it? In like manner, can any reasonable man doubt that in the two forms of the Ten Commandments we have to all intents and

purposes the actual substance of what the Lord is stated to have said—supposing, that is, we accept the fact that He spoke at all? Indeed, we may state it as an axiom of revelation that it is far more important to be quite sure of the fact that God spake than it is to be perfectly certain of the exact words He used; for the simple reason that the essential virtue of the Divine word lies in its substantive meaning and not in its minute verbal form, except of course so far as the former may be dependent upon the latter. Now, no man in his senses can for a moment suppose that anything turns upon the fact whether or not the words *his field* were included among those God uttered from Sinai. Every one must see that the phrase *nor anything that is his* is of sufficient breadth to include *his field*, no matter how large or how small the field may have been. Whereas everything turns upon the fact whether or not God said “Thou shalt not covet,” and upon whether the person who said it was actually God or was virtually Moses.

We pass on, then, to inquire what light the last of the commandments throws upon the origin of all, and whether it is possible to regard this precept as absolutely authoritative without postulating its authority as Divine. It

is, of course, patent to every one that the last commandment acts as a safeguard to all the others, or at all events to those of the second table. Theft, adultery and murder in every case involve the infringement of the tenth commandment as an unavoidable preliminary, so that if that were preserved inviolate the earlier precepts would remain unbroken. It is plain, therefore, that this is the purpose of the tenth commandment—to act as a barrier for the protection of the others. We may certainly infer here the presence of design. This is equally so whether the lawgiver is Divine or human. It was the manifest intention of the person imposing the law to put restraint upon the desires as containing in themselves the springs of all action. But has any human being the right to impose restraint upon my desires? And if any human being has the right, is there any likelihood of his possessing also the power? Do we not all know that the attempt to restrain our desires, if made by any one else, would be no more successful than the attempt to restrain the wind from blowing or the tide from rising? The desires in themselves are impulses absolutely ungovernable by any second person. A man may imprison and enchain his fellow-man, but his desires he must leave alone. Supposing,

therefore, that the ultimate author of the tenth commandment was Moses, or any one else, all that we can understand him to have meant to say is that in order to keep the previous commandments it was needful for a man to impose restraint upon his own desires. But to understand this would be to dilute very considerably the force and meaning of "Thou shalt not covet." In fact, it is simply impossible to interpret that precept literally and according to its full and obvious significance, and not to see that if it has any meaning at all it can only be that the person who forbids to covet, if he forbids it at all, must have the natural power no less than the natural right to lay restraint upon the desires. The person who alone can say so is the Person to whom the desires no less than all the other faculties, capacities and impulses of the mind are subject—that is, their Maker. But then, to go a step further, Is there any one who does not feel that he is under a natural obligation to place restraint upon his desires? And is there any one who does not see that if he does not do so, his desires will very soon place restraints of a multifarious but very severe kind upon him? Am I at liberty, either as regards myself or as regards my fellow-man, to give the rein to my desires to the utmost possible limit,

even supposing I stop short of actually infringing other and independent commandments by the commission of theft, adultery, and murder? Are there not many ways in which the unbridled exercise of my desires will work havoc in the domain of my relations to my neighbour, and most unquestionably in that of the duties which I owe to myself? Is it not plain that, even in the sphere of imagination and thought, unrestrained licence cannot fail to be productive of very disastrous and disgraceful results?

But if this is the case, does it not show to demonstration that in spite of ourselves there are certain restraints imposed by nature, to say nothing about circumstance, upon the exercise of the desires and the thoughts—that in spite of our eagerly longed-for and asserted freedom, we are, after all, not absolutely free even in the freest of all domains—the realm of thought and desire? If I *think* with impropriety of my neighbour, is not that certain so to affect my conduct towards him as to bring about undesirable complications between us? If my code of inward morality is one of unbridled libertinism, is it possible that my life should be otherwise than fraught with contamination and contagion to my fellow-creatures? And will not this inevitably act perniciously and detrimen-

tally upon myself? So manifestly is this the case, that when the great Lawgiver appeared incarnate among men, it was here, in the realm of desire, that He detected the spring and essence of obedience or of disobedience to the moral law: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." There is, therefore, in the nature of things, that which warns us against the danger of allowing the desires to run riot and unrestrained, and especially on account of the evil which may accrue therefrom to ourselves; but the tenth commandment forbids it rather on account of our neighbour's welfare being injured thereby: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife," and the like. It is zealous for the safety, honour, and welfare of the neighbour, and sets the landmark which is to determine and defend his interests in the desires.

And we are clearly in a position to ask two questions about this matter. First, can we or can we not discover traces of wisdom in the provision thus made? Is it or is it not for the benefit of our fellow-men that we should hold our desires in check? Even supposing that the unrestrained licence of the desires does not lead on to the infringement of other distinct precepts, is not

the welfare of my neighbour promoted by my showing all due regard to his interest in desire and thought? And will not this naturally re-act to the promotion of my own well-being if he manifests the same consideration for me? But if so, then secondly, who is it who is thus paternally interested in my own and my neighbour's well-being, but some one who is not my neighbour and is not myself—who, in fact, stands in the relation of a common father to us both? He who says "Thou shalt not covet that which is thy neighbour's," if the words have any meaning, must speak from a standing-ground that is higher than mine or my neighbour's; and if the words have the meaning which they seem to have, they bear their own testimony to the authority with which they are spoken and to the character of the person speaking them.

If they mean, then, what they seem to mean, they imply the existence of One who has the right to impose this injunction and to require obedience to it. And so far as there is any response in the heart and conscience to the reality of the command, and so far as there is any witness in the moral nature and in the constitution of society to the truth, wisdom and justice of the precept, so far is this response confirmatory of the evidence which the precept



bears to the existence and the nature of the person who gives it. We may not, indeed, appeal to the precept in proof that there is a God ; but postulating the existence of God, we may legitimately point to the evidence afforded by the precept in confirmation of His existence and in illustration of His character. And while the constitution of the moral nature is what it can be shown to be, and the tendency of the precept to the advantage and well-being of society is a matter of experience and demonstration, we may surely point to these things as facts which have to be accounted for and explained on the opposite supposition, that behind and beyond them all there is no moral controlling power, no conscious and deliberate designer, who has arranged that these things should be as they are rather than otherwise, so that the dictates of the moral nature and the interests of society do not move in opposite directions, but work harmoniously towards one and the same beneficent result which is the glory of God in the good of man. Certainly, if the existence of a moral sense is denied, it must and will be very difficult to prove it ; but surely Bishop Butler has gone a long way towards doing so by showing that it is impossible for any one to pass the same judgment

on himself or another upon two different actions which are diametrically opposite in character? \* No one, for example, can regard cruelty and kindness with the same feelings, and all must admit that the man who does, if such there be, is deficient in the faculty of judgment; but if this is the case, is not the existence of the moral sense established as a fact thereby? Thus St. Paul says of the Gentiles—that is, of man independently of any external revelation—that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another. And it does not seem possible to rebut this testimony.

But then, what is the meaning of the moral sense, of the involuntary perception that we have of the difference between right and wrong? Can we regard it as a mere accident, alone and by itself, or must we not rather look upon it as the reflection of an external standard or law which occasions this difference according as the law or standard is or is not fulfilled? And is not each involuntary act of this discriminating faculty equivalent to an indication on the part of this law or standard of approval or disapproval of the action judged? Is it not a

\* Works, vol. ii. 10.

proof, so to say, that the foundation principle of the world is a moral principle, and an energetic because a not indifferent moral principle, and therefore a personal moral principle? In short, what is the voice which thus passes judgment within us, if it be not the echo of the voice of God? It is clearly not our own voice, because we are conscious that however inseparable from us it may be, it is nevertheless distinct from ourselves, and moreover from its very nature it asserts authority over us and claims submission at our hands. We feel that it has a right to say, and can say, "Thou shalt not covet."

Furthermore, the revelation of the New Testament has taught us that covetousness is idolatry; and inasmuch as covetousness indicates the going forth of the heart after objects of sense, its truly idolatrous character is obvious. But this fact it is which gives to the tenth commandment its remarkable feature of fitly closing and completing the ten by reverting to the standpoint and subject of the first—"Thou shalt have none other gods but me." He who begins with announcing Himself as the sole object of worship, after traversing the whole field of morals rightly ends with proscribing that heart-worship of the creature

which is implied in coveting. He claims to be independent of and separate from His creatures, and declines to be identified with them or to have them substituted for Himself. The revelation, therefore, is complete: "I am the Lord thy God . . . . thou shalt not covet."

What, then, is the light which the tenth commandment throws upon the origin and authority of the moral law? Does it not speak to us of One who so tries the hearts and reins that He knoweth whereof we are made, and understandeth our thoughts long before—who detects in the unrestrained desires after any earthly object that spirit of disloyalty which casts off allegiance to Him, as well as that infringement of the neighbour's rights which must ultimately prove fatal to ourselves? Does not the law, then, taken at its just value and significance, proclaim loudly the existence and character of the Lawgiver? If "Thou shalt not covet" is a fact and a reality, it must come from One who alone has a right to say so. But if He has a right to say so, then to dispute His authority is altogether out of the question. If the law is Divine in its origin, it must be paramount and absolute in its authority. There can be no appeal from it, and no violation or infringement of it with impunity. Where, then,

shall we seek for the foundations of morality? They lie in the very framework and essence of our own being, and in the constitution of society. The moral law is the reflection of the very plan and principle upon which society is formed, and of the force and influence by which it is held together; it is that in relation to which our own existence moves most harmoniously and attains the greatest freedom; it is that by obedience to which the complex relations and interests of society can alone be fully developed and adequately secured. But if the foundations of morality can be discovered here, must they not lie also in that which is alike the foundation of our own existence and of the constitution of society? Must they not strike deep down to the very throne—nay, the personal being and essence of God Himself? And thus, if the law is a revelation of God, it cannot be independent of that which is a yet fuller and subsequent revelation of Him—namely, religion; and if religion is a true revelation of God, then the ultimate foundation of religion and morality must be one and the same Being,—none other than the Person and the Word of the living and true God.

## XVIII.

“If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

ROM. xiii. 9, 10.

THE precept which is here quoted incidentally by St. Paul is the great glory of the Old Testament revelation. Although not one of the ten commandments, our Lord shows us that it expresses the very essence of those which are comprised in the second table. Had it not, however, been enunciated in the midst of those documents which embody and enforce the Decalogue, we should undoubtedly have hesitated so to summarise the second portion of it, and should certainly not have credited the Mosaic code with any such precept. As it is, the words are found in the midst of the most transitory and local of the books of the Law,\* and therefore cannot be separated from its intrinsic and essential teaching. And yet,

\* Lev. xix. 18.

strange to say, there is no other ancient moral code than that of Moses which has enunciated so sublime and spiritual a precept as this. We may admit, therefore, that no treatment of the general scope and principles of the ten commandments would be complete which should omit this as highly characteristic of the latter half of them.

Nor must it by any means be overlooked, that as this precept stands in Leviticus it bears traces both of its special origin and likewise of its permanent and universal authority. "Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. I am the Lord." Israel, therefore, is clearly entitled to the whole merit of the precept as its own exclusive possession; while the fact that it is enunciated in the name of the living Lord not only vouches for its Divine authority, but proves also that the very form and framework of its setting was unexpectedly and inherently expansive, inasmuch as if the Divine Father of the human race was indeed the Lawgiver, then the significance of the words "thy people" can only be co-extensive with the limits of that race, and "thy neighbour" must virtually mean not only every born Israelite, but every member of the

whole family of God which He has purchased and claimed for His own, and redeemed by the incarnation and the death of His well beloved Son. If we thus accept and allow the broad facts of revelation, all the surroundings of the precept become correct and intelligible ; but if these features are invented and fictitious, then we have to account for the fact that Israel alone among the nations attained to the discovery of this moral precept, the position of which in a book like that of Leviticus is incongruous and incomprehensible, and that the precept itself is the most perfect expression of those moral obligations which we all feel, and from which we cannot escape. If, therefore, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" is a statement of any binding force, wherein lies its power? whence is its authority derived? and how is it that it has any authority at all? Supposing society to be a merely accidental growth exhibiting and embodying no moral principle, and therefore pointing to no design, what right has society or any individual in society to say to me "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"? I am prepared to maintain on this principle that I have a right to love myself more than my neighbour, and that he has an equal right to love himself more than he



loves me. He has, in fact, no right to prescribe any rule for my conduct in the matter, unless he can show his power to do so. But for all that there is something in my nature which responds to the wisdom and recognises the authority of this precept as soon as it is declared ; and this is a fact which cannot be explained unless we postulate the existence of an authoritative moral will behind the precept. But then in that case the very existence of the precept, and the form in which it is given, is a proof that this moral will is not merely otiose and dormant, but active and energetic in expressing itself. Thus the law, if its form is not fictitious and delusive, is a witness to the activity and operation of the moral will—is itself a guarantee that the will has come out of its hiding-place to reveal and express itself, and therefore an indication that it can and may do so again, and in fact a pledge and earnest that it will. Thus morality, so far as it is a living and real thing vested with any true authority, contains in itself the evidence of revelation, and supplies a valid basis for religion ; and thus religion not only has its roots in morality, but morality also can have no valid authority unless it supplies a solid and secure foundation for religion. And

thus, not only is religion dependent upon the same foundation upon which morality rests, but morality has also no true foundation at all if it has not one which is likewise a valid basis for religion. For if morality does not point us directly to the supernatural as its only adequate and permanent authority, it rests upon nothing but conventional prescription, and must therefore be liable to change; but so far as it does it indicates likewise to us a source from which may well flow not only the purifying streams of morality, but also the life-giving waters of religion—not only the precepts of a permanent ethical code, but also the blessed hope and promises of supernatural and revealed truth.

There can be no question more important in the present day than this concerning the foundation of morality. What is the basis upon which the precept "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" rests, if it is not Divine? Nay, is the precept in itself a wise and just one? Is it true? or is it exaggerated and extreme? If it is true, how do we know it to be true? Is it a precept we could have discovered for ourselves? and if so, what is the discovery of it more than the perception of a primary principle which we in no sense invented, but which must have re-

vealed itself as part of the very original plan upon which society was constituted, the intention with which it was designed? I use the words intention and design advisedly, because they imply and involve a personal act; but I ask also, can we contemplate the fact and express or explain it in any other way? If what we discover is a principle antecedent to the existence or coeval with the origin of society, or expressive merely of the perfect standard and ideal towards which it tends, is not this equally an indication of a mind directing and controlling its development? Can we conceive of society as possessing any inherent tendency thus to develop itself? and must not the tendency, so far as it is real, be accepted as evidence of a person and will guiding it? So far is this the case that even the most enthusiastic disciples of evolution cannot avoid the use of language expressive of personal agency in describing the processes of which they speak. Doubtless, if we shut God out of the world and deliberately turn the key upon Him, we must resort to other methods of accounting for recognised phenomena; but is it more reasonable to invest lifeless abstractions, such as society and the like, with attributes characteristic of ourselves? or to suppose that tendencies and principles

manifest in them point to an original archetypal mind, of which our own powers and faculties are the minute reflection, and from which they, no less than these tendencies and principles, have been derived?

But over and beyond the recognition of this grand principle of loving the neighbour as oneself, the apostle gives us the reason why it is so comprehensive and so effectual. It virtually covers the entire area of the second table, and therefore practically secures the fulfilment of it. He shows us, moreover, that the essential principle of the law is love; it is designed with love and fulfilled by love. There is nothing more sublimely characteristic of Holy Scripture than the majestic and unfaltering testimony which it bears to the presence and the person of God. It is uniformly and persistently unconscious of the possibility of the opposite idea, except as a thought lurking in the heart of the fool. But probably there is no action more inseparable from the idea of a person, or more inevitably implying a person, at all events in its higher and fuller forms, than love. If, therefore, love is the object at which the moral law aims, and if love is the only principle that adequately fulfils it, is not this the highest possible indication of the personal character of that will which

the law expresses? For it is plain that the object which the law sets before itself is the protection and advancement of the interests and welfare of the neighbour, and the only way in which these can be protected and advanced is by the action of love. Love, moreover, will anticipate the requirements of the law, and prevent the possibility of its infringement as nothing else can, not even the strictest compliance with the mere letter of the law which leaves out love. Surely, therefore, in proportion to the reality of this as a fact, we may find in it an unmistakable proof of the real principle operating in the law, and of the really personal character of that principle. Nothing else than mind can truly love, and nothing else than mind can set love before itself as an object to be aimed at. When, therefore, this is done, we have evidence of the presence and the action of mind. If, therefore, the free exercise and action of love is the direct object of the law, what higher evidence can we desire of the presence and operation of a personal will? Nay, is it not certain that this can in no sense be the purpose of the law unless there is a personal will behind it?

But if theft, adultery, and murder, are forbidden for no other reason than because

they work ill to the neighbour, and if to this end also the law of truth is inculcated and restraint upon the desires enforced, is it not certain that love is the direct object of the law, inasmuch as by no other means than by the exercise of love can the law be adequately fulfilled? Certain it is that the most punctilious discharge of all social obligations will leave a great void unfilled if love is not thrown in to fill it. The presence of love in the affairs of life is like that of sunshine. The form and outward features of the world and its objects are the same, but the colouring and expressions are indescribably different. It is the difference between dejection and exuberant joy. So truly is this the case that conventionally love is the very antithesis of the legal spirit, from which we learn that the necessary complement of the law is love, and that if the law was intended to promote the exercise of love, it could only be by spirit infused into it by God, inasmuch as historically this has never been the effect of it, and practically it was not likely to be so. If, therefore, the theory of the law implied love, this again was a patent evidence of a mind so conceiving and designing it; and that love is the fulfilling of the law, we have abundant practical illustrations all around us. Mere

legal restraints are daily found to be altogether inadequate to protect or preserve the well-being of society. What is the jealousy of class interests, the collision between capital and labour, the misconception between rich and poor, the want of understanding between master and servant, employer and employed, and the like, but so many more evidences of the want of love? There can be no mutual confidence, but only mutual suspicion and mutual restraint, where there is not love. If love worketh no ill to his neighbour, certainly that which worketh the greatest possible ill, which is productive of all kinds of mischief, is the absence of love. It may and probably will in many cases stop short of any open breach of the moral law, because of the very existence and operation of that law; but though the law is not violated, it assuredly will not be fulfilled: indeed, the *intention* of the law can only be fulfilled by love. But in using these very words, what have we not implied? what have we not conceded? Even the work of a designer, and the presence and action of a presiding mind, which has discerned the end from the beginning and provided and ordained accordingly. And certain it is that the more we interpret the law in the light of love and accept love as the only

adequate fulfilment of its precepts, the more readily we shall adore the wisdom and acknowledge the presence of the person giving it ; for if love was the design of the lawgiver, then love is the attribute and prerogative of a person ; and if the origin of the Law was love, then its authority must be Divine.

But again, if love is the fulfilling of the law, it can only be because it secures the greatest possible amount of protection for the interests of the neighbour. Thus the law is eminently and conspicuously unselfish. It puts the interests of the neighbour on a level with one's own. Now, this is strictly speaking and practically a superhuman standard. Doubtless, on many occasions the interests of self are postponed by every virtuous man to those of his neighbour. But it stands to reason that the same principle would involve under certain extreme circumstances the surrender of life itself. And this is a degree to which very few would be willing to attain, and to which still fewer have attained ; but, nevertheless, nothing short of this is the extreme requirement of the law, nothing short of this can absolutely fulfil it. And therefore, if the requirements of the law are perfect love, the very enunciation of these requirements, if Divine, contains the pro-



mise of their fulfilment. If God has given a law, and that law requires the neighbour to be loved even as the self, it stands to reason that the law must be fulfilled : but fulfilled by whom ? The fulfilment of the law would be an achievement worthy of the Lawgiver ; and none but the Lawgiver could fulfil it, for no one but He whose name and nature is love could give an exhibition of perfect love. Thus it was He who unfolded more than any one the spiritual requirements of the law who was found to give the most perfect exhibition of their fulfilment. It was He who said " Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," who was found prepared when His hour came to surrender His own life even to the death upon the cross. It therefore showed that the requirements and authority of the law were absolute, and consequently that its origin was Divine. The most perfect exhibition of the law of love, however, involved the entire surrender of the self ; and thus the cross has become synonymous not only with self-sacrifice, but with love. But it is only in the light of the life and death of Christ that we can see how rigorous and how exacting are the claims of the law, and how truly the fulfilment of it involves love. The cross must ever challenge

to itself the right to be regarded as a super-human and Divine exhibition of love. All interpretation of it is inadequate which pronounces it to be merely human. But if the merit of the cross is Divine, what is the essential character of that law which it vindicates, confirms, establishes, and illustrates? Can it be other than Divine? The cross was endured in obedience to no human law, and no human law was honoured or fulfilled in its imposition. "I find no fault in this man" was the admission of the highest functionary of the Roman law; and therefore the only law that was fulfilled in it was the law of God. But it exemplified and did not surpass the requirements of that law, for the love of the neighbour as the self when salvation was at stake demanded no less than the giving up of life, and if the life had been withheld the law would have been unfulfilled. Thus not only does the cross of Christ exhibit in itself a Divine act, but it shows also how profound, how sacred, how Divine is the origin, and therefore how absolute and how universal is the authority, of the law which it illustrates and fulfils. And as the cross of Christ is the triumph, symbol, and exponent of religion, its very essence, root, and kernel, its foundation and its crown, so that in behold-

ing the cross of Christ we behold the evidence and demonstration of the truth of religion, the depth and stability of its foundation as a Divine gift to man, so in the cross of Christ we see as we can see nowhere else that the foundation of religion is the foundation also of morality, that the moral law is based on nothing else than that foundation on which religion also rests, so that if there be no morality there can be no religion ; and likewise, if there be no Divine evidence of, no Divine truth in, religion, there can also be no Divine authority in, no Divine sanction for, the moral law ; but the one common foundation on which both alike rest is overthrown, and universal moral ruin is the inevitable result.

## XIX.

“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”—ROM. x. 4.

THE exhibition of love as the fulfilling of the law which the cross of Christ presents to us has altogether another aspect than that merely of complete attainment to an ideal and perfect moral standard such as the law demands. It has an aspect towards God and an aspect towards man. Its aspect towards God is that which it has when regarded as the manifestation of God's personal love to man. This is its evident and most universal aspect, and that probably in which it is still destined to make the greatest impression on mankind, and achieve its greatest victories. Many, perhaps, who cannot look on the death of Christ in its relation to the moral law, and are unaffected by it in that relation, are altogether attracted and subdued by it as the great revelation of the love of God. And thus each successive age of the world's history supplies additional illustration of the Lord's words, “And I, if I be lifted up, will

draw all men unto me." But the cross of Christ has also another aspect in relation to man, and one which it was intended to have where the ethical teaching of the law had really taken effect, as it would have done among those Israelites who believed in Christ.

The death of Christ, we may be quite certain, had altogether another purpose than that of supplying an example of symmetrical correspondence with the law. Regarded in this aspect, there are probably few whom it would win. But there are probably few also who would thus regard it. The law of God is a frigid and unattractive thought when it is not apprehended in any relation to ourselves. It is only when the law of God is apprehended as a symbol expressing and representing all the confusion and disorder that sin has produced within us, that the law of God becomes a matter of personal interest. When we look into our own hearts and see there the havoc and demolition wrought by sin, and feel our own inability to accomplish our endeavours and desires, our painful fallings-short of what we might and ought to be, then it is that the law of God as a symbol expressive of this consciousness becomes a terrible reality, and then it is that we begin to ask in despair whether there is any method of

deliverance by which we can attain a position where we shall be beyond the reach of these stings and torments of self-reproach and condemnation. It would be untrue to say that we had committed adultery, theft, or murder, or had, it may even be, in any very obvious sense violated the letter of the commandments forbidding these things, even when interpreted most stringently; but for all that there is a sense of something terribly wrong within—of incompleteness and defect, of spiritual hunger, disease and poverty, of nakedness, shame, and destitution in the soul,—and this is what is meant by the broken law of God. It is, perhaps, not very easy to see the fitness of the words to express the condition, or to define precisely the precepts that have been transgressed; but if we understand by the law of God that condition of wholeness, integrity, satisfaction, and soundness, the want of which we feel so painfully, then it is plain that this sense of want may well be represented and expressed by the broken law of God. And certain it is that such a sense as this is that which the contemplation of the law as an inviolable standard is intended to produce. The law is meant to work in us a sense of sin, of guilt, and defect. When this is the result produced, we need not stop to specify

which of the ten commandments we have broken. As a matter of fact, whatever the divisions and subdivisions of the law, there are but two, which inculcate love to God and love to man, and it needs but little discernment to perceive that we are verily guilty upon both points. We imperfectly love our fellow-man, and we do not at all love God. Now, as this is the condition of mental consciousness which the law is intended to work in us, so the aspect towards man in which the cross is meant to be regarded is that in which it is seen completely to repair and supply the havoc and defect felt within, and to meet with perfect sympathy, sufficiency, and satisfaction, the sense of want and disaster that is so painful and so deep.

In this sense, then, it is that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. That is to say, those who accept Christ as the effectual means whereby the imperfection, want, and misery felt within, are counteracted and removed, find in Him and see that He is the very end of the Law, that which exhausts all its meaning, satisfies all its demands and fulfils its highest ideals. It was because the law was apprehended by the Jew as a partial and imperfect code, dealing chiefly with restrictions, and not inculcating that which was

involved by the correlative precept when stated positively, that though he revered it as God-given, and was inclined to worship its very letter, it became to him an obstacle in the way of his salvation, and a direct barrier between him and Christ. For as long as the law was a merely restrictive principle, the Jew might flatter himself that he had not overstepped its precepts, and would be unlikely to reproach himself for falling short of the merely implied demands of it which he failed altogether to perceive. It was thus that the rich young man in the Gospel\* was offended, and stumbled at the application and interpretation given by Christ of that law in which till then he was disposed to boast. Christ showed that the law involved positive demands as well as imposed negative restrictions, and that it was in respect of these positive demands that the severity and urgency of the law was felt as a condemning principle. For in this way not only could no man fulfil the law, but not even could Christ fulfil it unless He was prepared to lay down His life and die for it. Nor is this blindness with regard to the real nature of the law characteristic only of the Jew. Doubtless the statement just made will appear to many a so-called Christian to be

\* Matt. xix. 16; Mark x. 17; Luke xviii. 18; cf. x. 25.



paradoxical, if not little short of blasphemy. But it is nevertheless literally true. Christ could not and did not fulfil the law till He had died for it, because only by dying could the precept "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" be literally fulfilled. And it is this that shows us that to every one who is in the position of the Jew the law cannot be other than a stumbling-block and an occasion to fall in the way to Christ. True it is that the law was our school-master or our guide, to take us by the hand and lead us to Christ, but only on condition that we were content to be led by it and *left there with Him*. The law was intended to be a condemning principle, and in no sense a means of life, else had Christ as the end of the law been superfluous and unnecessary. Unquestionably there are many to whom this will seem to be altogether inconsistent and at variance with numerous assertions in the Psalms and elsewhere of the perfection and beauty of the law of God, and of the advantage to be derived from observing its precepts. But assuredly it is not so. No one will affirm that because it is hopeless to attain to a standard, therefore it is useless or unprofitable to attempt to do so, or that the standard ceases to be a guide in consequence. The writer of the hundred and

nineteenth Psalm, who is loudest in his praises of the law and in his professions of having been guided by it, is constrained to end\* with the confession that he has gone astray like a sheep that is lost. Even if, therefore, we assume that the law was his hope *then*, what about its condemnation of the past? What hope could he find in the law to set over against that condemnation, if he did not find it in the Law-giver rather than His law? But this is to throw in the opposite principle of *faith*, and to give up and throw away the law as a source of hope or ground of confidence. So true is it that Christ becomes the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. There are, then, unquestionably two principles in Ethics which are opposite, and in some sense antagonistic, as they have often proved; and these, in the language of St. Paul, are the law and faith. Christ as the fulfiller of the law utterly destroyed its condemning power. The law was satisfied and became silent. It was as though a person who had failed, and was utterly bankrupt, had a fresh start given him in life, with not only the means provided of avoiding former errors, but with other counsels, aids and tendencies enabling him to avoid them. For

\* Psalm cxix. 176.

though the condemning power of the law was destroyed, its ethical force and significance was largely increased. As it was seen to be so terribly exacting, so it was seen to be likewise stringently imperative. As the penalties of the law could not be eluded, so neither could its commands be disobeyed. The law was futile and baseless as a ground of hope, but it became invaluable as a guide of life. And it is plain that David and many of the writers of the Old Testament had risen to the apprehension of it in this aspect. Hence their expressions of zeal for it and devotion to it. They had not beheld Christ as the end of the law, but they had imbibed His spirit and so had learnt to hope in God and to live by it.

And perhaps the very best method that we can adopt of expressing the two opposite principles referred to is that of using the law *for* life and *from* life—of taking it as the means of life or as the guide of life. Now, Christ has shown us that the law is useless as a means of life, because He is Himself the end of the law for righteousness; He has also shown us how to use the law as a guide of life by giving us an example that we should follow His steps. He is both a sacrifice for sin and also an ensample of godly life. He is thus the end of the law

as being its highest fulfilment and the victim of its pains and penalties. The law has spent itself on Christ as a victim, and accomplished itself in Him as a standard.

But it may be said, Whereby do we know this? wherein does the death of Christ differ from any other death? And in answer to this question we may ask again, Wherein does the life of Christ differ from any other life? It is impossible to separate the life of Christ from the teaching of Christ and the claims of Christ. It is impossible to separate the death of Christ from the claims of Christ as the consequence of those claims. But if so, the death of Christ is as solitary as the life of Christ is unique. He stands alone in His death because He stands alone in His life and alone in His teaching, and because His death is the seal of the validity of His claims. He is thus the end of the law because of the zeal with which He professed to fulfil it,—“My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work,”\*—and because He declared that the spring of His death and resurrection was the commandment of God,—“Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again: no man

\* John iv. 34.

taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."\*

At the same time the apostle does not conceal the fact—neither must we conceal it—that Christ is the end of the law to every one that believeth, *but to no one else*. He does not, indeed, express this, but it is clearly implied, because it is *for righteousness* that He is the end of the law. That is, Christ is the complete satisfaction of all that the law seeks after in the heart and nature of him who longs for righteousness and who is continually baffled in the search for it by the discovery of the continually increasing demands of the law. There is no end to these demands, looked at in their naked simplicity and severity; but Christ has put an end to them, for He is the end of the law. He has satisfied the otherwise insatiable. The righteousness of God's testimonies is everlasting, and He is their everlasting righteousness. But that He is and can be this to him only that believeth is patent from the fact that if Christ is not the end of the law there is and can be no other end to it. The law is unsatisfied and insatiable; it is infinite in its demands and everlasting in its

\* John x. 17, 18.

enforcement of them, and those only can delude themselves into the belief that they have fulfilled, or can fulfil, the law who are totally ignorant of its nature and its claims. To make good this position to those who are so is perhaps a hopeless matter. We are thankful to remember that it is enough continually to proclaim and enforce the truth. Then *we* are no longer responsible for its effect. God will take care of His own word, and will see that it does not return unto Him void. Therefore it is our duty to declare and declare again, as though it had never been declared before, that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. The mere statement of that fact is certain, in God's good time, to make its own way and produce its own results, and these we are content to leave with Him.

What, then, is the bearing of this fact upon the origin and authority of the moral law, and what light does it throw upon the relation between religion and morality? Surely it contains in itself the key of the whole position, the very solution of the problem, for if there is any one doctrine of the gospel which may challenge to itself an indisputably divine origin, it is surely the doctrine of faith. Not only as a matter of fact is no trace of it to be discovered outside

the area of revelation, for the simple reason that there could be no possible ground for it till such a ground was laid, as it is the sole prerogative of revelation to proclaim; but also if there is any one doctrine that is most repulsive to the natural heart, and whose very pretensions are fatal to its acceptance by man as he is in himself and left to himself, it is most undeniably this doctrine of faith. If proof of the statement is demanded, we have it here in the fact that there is no one who has sincerely and with his whole heart embraced the doctrine, who will not endorse the statement and confess that this is the way in which he received it—with great reluctance, and after, it may be, long repugnance, resistance, and aversion. It was so with St. Paul, it was so with Luther: nay, who is there with whom it has not been so? We may be certain, therefore, that this plant is of no human growth,—it is an exotic in human soil. Its origin is proclaimed by its very character, for the heart of man could not have produced it. But what is the doctrine of faith, and of salvation by faith, but *religion* in its simplest and purest form? And it is a plant that will infallibly wither and pine except in the atmosphere of the supernatural. For if Christ was not a superhuman Person, and if the incidents of His life and death and

history did not transcend and surpass and defy the conditions of the merely human and the merely natural, we know not how they could be surpassed, nor what would surpass them, and Christ is the sole object and ground of faith. We have nothing and no one to believe in, if we do not believe in Christ. Christ is the centre, the substance, the foundation, and the evidence of religion: take away Christ, and we can have no religion properly so called, for we can have no Divine sanction or guarantee for it; but given Christ, and we have religion too, for Christ is the foundation-stone, the corner-stone, the head-stone of the edifice of faith which religion proclaims with shoutings of Grace, Grace unto it. We need be in no anxiety about the safety of religion, or the stability and security of faith, so long as we have Christ, for the cause of faith is the cause of Christ.

But how about morality if religion is overthrown? We have seen that morality strikes its roots down deeper than ever in the soil of that religion which proclaims Christ as the end of the law for righteousness. It finds its most congenial soil there because it discerns in Him its complete vindication and justification. Before morality, to change the figure, beheld



Christ, she dreamt of her Divine origin; after she has seen Him it is impossible for her to doubt of it, for Christ has not only shown her from whence she came, and declared her to be the daughter of the voice of God, but has revealed also the Father from whose voice she springs, and manifested Himself as the very Word which was in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, and in process of time and under the limitations of time gave utterance to the voice. It is Christ who has given us the fuller conception of the majesty and requirements of the law, and has shown us that no conception is adequate that falls short of that. He has therefore laid the foundations of morality deeper and stronger and broader than ever they were laid before; but in so doing He has also revealed their essential identity with those of religion. If Christ is the end of the law it can only be because He is also its origin and commencement, and therefore, if He who is at once the end and origin of the law is rejected, the foundations of morality are overthrown. It is not merely religion that is destroyed, but morality also that is sapped. All experience tends to show that it is not possible to increase our reverence for a given object and still retain it when we have ceased

to believe in the grounds on which it was increased. But if Christ is the end of the law, He is an end which none but the Lawgiver could ever contemplate; and therefore it is not possible to reject Him and yet believe in the Divine sanctions of the moral law, for in rejecting Him we have detected the unreality of those sanctions and thrown them to the winds. If religion, meaning thereby faith in Christ as the end of the law, is a baseless fiction, then morality also has no sure foundation. It is no longer unchangeable in its authority because Divine in its origin; but it is conventional, human, expedient, transitory. It is of the earth earthy, and is doomed to change and perish with the earth; but if religion is a Divine thing and given by God, then also is the origin and authority of the moral law Divine, and then also are the foundations of morality permanent and secure, because Christ has been declared by God to be the one only end of the law for that righteousness which is its ultimate aim and object, and because He has been found to be so to every one that believeth.

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